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Poems by Philip Appleman, Michael Benedikt, Helen Chasin, Susan Grathwohl, Michael Hutchison, John Jacob, John Matthias, James McMichael, John Romano, Robert Vas Dias

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NOTES

LEONARD MICHAELS tells us he recently stopped going to the movies. . . . Fawcett will bring out **MARGE PIERCY's** novel **Small Changes** in paperback this fall. A collection of her poems, **To Be of Use**, was published this winter by Doubleday. . . . **DON ZACHARIA** owns a retail liquor store in Scarsdale and is writing a novel. . . . The poems in this issue were chosen by Michael Anania who will be alternating with Paul Zweig as poetry consultant. . . . **PHILIP APPLEMAN** is currently Visiting Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia and recipient of a Fellowship in Creative Writing from the National Endowment on the Arts. . . . **The Poetry of Surrealism** and **The Prose Poem** are **MICHAEL BENEDIKT's** two forthcoming anthologies. He was recently named poetry editor of **The Paris Review**. . . . **HELEN CHASIN** lives in New York City where she teaches poetry workshops. Her second book of poems will be published next year by Little, Brown. . . . **SUSAN GRATHWOHL's** first book is **Explanations of Photosynthesis.** She describes herself as an active feminist; she and her husband will be starting a printer's collective in Ithaca. . . . **MICHAEL HUTCHISON** lives on the Lower East Side. He reviews books, writes articles on rock and jazz, and is completing a novel and a play. . . . **JOHN JACOB** is a contributing editor of **Margins.** He has been a social worker for the state of Illinois and has just finished a book exposing corruption in a city's social agencies. . . . On leave from Notre Dame and living in Eng-

(Continued on p. 321)

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POINTS AFTER

"NO FOUNDATION ALL THE WAY DOWN THE LINE"

Victor Navasky's hard-hitting review of Nielsen's *The Big Foundations* in the last issue of PR——as well as the book itself——exposes many of the pretensions and failures of the handout corporations. But institutional criticism of the foundations, however probing, leaves out the simple fact that most foundations have developed a highly organized structure for creating the illusion that they are coping with their problems while actually dissolving them in a stream of bureaucratic activities. This is done largely through policies and procedures that inevitably lead to certain kinds of grants and exclude others.

Take literature (the area I know best), where a peculiar mixture of caution and gimmickry has been arrived at by combining consensus thinking with the cult of novelty. Consensus thinking involves an assembly line of panels, studies, and consultations, which prove what has been assumed——or what is already known or what isn't worth knowing. The results are safe, obvious, respectable——and often useless——grants. At the same time, foundations have been infected by the unrelenting search for the new that dominates the popular media, so that like the entertainment industry the foundations act as though they are breaking new cultural ground when they are really following the latest fashion. Actually there is no contradiction between playing it safe, like supporting the popular performing arts, and going for far-out but modish art projects, for both are simply two sides of the Zeitgeist.

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The literary, noncommercial magazines in this country, for example, which have always needed money but are particularly hard hit now by inflation, have gotten few grants from the leading foundations, either because they are not solid enough to please everybody or groovy enough to make a splash. The reasons usually given for not supporting the magazines either individually or collectively cover a wide range of ingenious explanations, excuses, and rationalizations. Here are some typical ones: how do we pick the magazines to give grants to; we don't give general support grants; we give only short-term grants, after which the magazines will need money again; why do the magazines have to operate on a deficit.

On those rare, celebrated occasions when a magazine does get a grant, it is usually for something other than what it is geared to do, and which it doesn't have the staff or resources to carry out properly. Thus, the foundations end up promoting those commercial aspects of the culture they were originally set up to compensate for, by letting the noncommercial magazines fend for themselves.

The prudence of foundation policy is best indicated by the fact that only two percent of the arts grants go to literature. Presumably this is because writing is lonely, dangerous, serious, fraught with meaning, and doesn't provide the bland social satisfactions that ballet, painting, or music offer their patrons. A little magazine doesn't have an opening night.

For those who still take at face value the rhetoric of grant giving, it might be useful to list some of the pillars of foundation policy.

The cult of the new: already described, but basically the assumption that one new project is worth two old ones.

The myth of science: the idea that the obvious can be demonstrated only by large and expensive "scientific" studies.

The worship of the experts: the belief that since a foundation is not equipped to make a judgment in the arts it must poll the largest possible number of "experts," whose opinions, if they are well chosen, always cancel each other out.

The ideal of free enterprise: the principle that institutions in the arts, like magazines, for instance, must not be given direct support for their activities, because that, like welfare, would stifle their initiative, whereas a grant for something other than what they are intended and equipped to do would stimulate their commercial appetites.

The principle of temporary support: the deep conviction that nothing should be supported for too long, since cultural institutions, like children, are supposed to be weaned when they grow up so that they can make it on their own in the big, competitive world. But, of course, this principle doesn't apply to the powerhouse cultural institutions like museums, orchestras, and ballets, which are entrenched enough to be indispensable.

Pilot projects: sometimes a pseudonym for any project to make it sound scientific and controlled, otherwise it means funding a part if the foundation is wary of the whole, and then subjecting the results to

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"scientific" analysis before taking the next step——generally borrowed from market research which tests the demand for a product before starting full-scale production.

Making an enterprise self-sufficient: a rationalization for supporting activities and institutions in the arts that will always operate at a deficit——a growing one in an inflation economy——by fostering the myth that a grant will put the enterprise on its feet and not just help defray the deficit——a prime example of capitalist thinking applied to nonprofit enterprises. Foundations, which are themselves nonprofit organizations, find it hard to believe that other nonprofit organizations can't learn to make a profit, or at least break even.

P.S. 1. Personnel does make a difference. At the Rockefeller Foundation, for example, a few new people are trying to get rid of the old ideological baggage and bureaucratic language. Similarly, the Humanities Division of the Ford Foundation has recently indicated a serious interest in literary programs that are neither pat nor quirky.

P.S. 2. Obviously, the floundering and the constant improvisations of the foundations help to maintain the instability of the noncommercial arts in America, particularly the literary magazines.

W. P.

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Richard Poirier

THE AESTHETICS OF RADICALISM

Let me start with a kind of apologia. The adversely critical evaluation I will be making of the radicalism of, say, Mailer and Marcuse, or of the radicalisms diversely represented by Wilhelm Reich, Charles Reich, or Jerry Rubin, will not be construed, I hope, as an attack on radicalism itself. And to defend technology against the kinds of disparagements it receives from these figures is not to align myself with a technocratic conservative like Daniel Bell. It is possible to be committed to the radical cause and, at the same time, to the position that technology is not necessarily "bad," that it incorporates and promotes acts of imagination at least as powerful as any simultaneously at work in the arts, and that it can be made, by a nonviolent social and economic revolution, to serve mankind's continuing self-creation.

By this standard, the figures mentioned at the beginning are not nearly radical enough, Their fear about the power of technology is excited, prompted, and supported by literary culture. Indeed, it can be said that to the extent that literature and the forms of imagination associated with it have become progressively *less* valuable to contemporary life, they have become insistently *more* valuable to a Mailer or a Marcuse. There is of course a distinct difference between them, in that Mailer finds his values in the activity of art and Marcuse in the preserved or achieved quality of art. But both arrogantly assume——in the matter of sexual behavior, for example——that literary values can be decisively evoked without need to speculate on the possibility that in this area they

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may be less "imaginative" than are the scientific hypotheses they are designed to displace. The sexual hierarchies in the writings of Marcuse and Mailer derive from an aesthetic that can pretend to be embattled while actually being wholly uninstructed by science. Theirs is an ultimate pastoralism and, like other presumably humanistic attitudes derived from literature, is probably a disservice to the ordinary conduct of life. "Pastoral" and "literary" are of course wildly elusive terms, but some stability might be given them by a preliminary illustration from *The Faerie Queene.*

In Book II Guyon descends into the Cave of Mammon. The Cave has ascribed to it the horrors of an industrial factory as well as the blandishments of finance capitalism. It is filled with treasure, with currency that reproduces itself without ever contributing to the growth of things other than money. Investment of this kind, money begetting money, is seen as a violation of nature, a perversion of which Volpone will later be guilty when, in the opening lines of Jonson's play, he compares the powers of gold to the generative influence of the sun. Guyon is there bribed with worldly grandeur and riches if he will swear loyalty to Queen Philotimē, thereby betraying his allegiance to Gloriana, the queen associated with the old codes of chivalry, the open fields and virgin lands where heroic exploits are still possible. He is in effect asked to join the new world of progress in the same canto in which Elizabeth is reminded by the long chronology of the kings of England that her legitimacy depends on her ties to the antique past. The choice allowed Guyon was of course no longer available even to Spenser: the industrial, capitalistic possibility had become a visible fact in the emerging shape of English and of modern society. Spenser makes clear that Guyon is out of phase, that the whole poem is "antique," a mirror of a past which is even then an imaginary one, a faery land.

The significance is marvelously wrought into the texture of the poem, with complications that make it more alive for us politically than the topical political allegory alone would suggest. Some of this significance is eloquently caught by R. H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. In the passage that follows one can see how images which even in literature are dependent for verification only on other literary works and conventions, images

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which do not refer to life so much as to myth, are subtly transformed into history, reified by being shifted from the context of an allegory into the context of social and economic critique:

> The religious revolution of the age came on a world heavy with the vastest economic crisis that Europe had experienced since the fall of Rome. Art and scientific curiosity and technical skill, learning and statesmanship, the scholarship which explored the past and the prophetic vision which pierced the future, had all poured their treasures into the sumptuous shrine of the new civilization. Behind the genii of beauty and wisdom who were its architects there moved a murky, but indispensable figure. It was the demon whom Dante had met muttering gibberish in the fourth circle of the Inferno, and whom Sir Guyon was to encounter three centuries later, tanned with smoke and seared with fire, in a cave adjoining the mouth of hell. His uncouth labours quarried the stones which Michael Angelo was to raise, and sank deep in the Roman clay the foundations of the walls to be adorned by Raphael.
>
> For it was the mastery of man over his environment which heralded the dawn of the new age, and it was in the stress of expanding economic energies that this mastery was proved and won. Like sovereignty in a feudal society, the economic efforts of the Middle Ages, except in a few favoured spots, had been fragmentary and decentralized. Now the scattered raiders were to be organized and disciplined; the dispersed and irregular skirmishes were to be merged in a grand struggle, on a front which stretched from the Baltic to the Ganges and from the Spice Islands to Peru. Every year brought news of fresh triumphs. The general who marshalled the host and launched the attack was economic power.

With his customary eloquence, that special blend of elegiac yearning and foreboding, that gives way to theatrical excitement in a new and terrifying world of force, Tawney's style here and elsewhere catches some of the complications of feeling that ideally attend any serious thought about the paradoxes of progress. The aesthetics at work in the passage is of a kind that usually informs the radical critique of progress. What I want to suggest by the examples of Tawney and Spenser is that a good deal of contemporary radical thinking derives from an ancient tradition, both

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literary and political, and that if it is to be called radical it is also culturally conservative. The movement of the passage from Tawney, as much as its argument, testifies to the power of Spenser. Literature and art are evoked as if these were the embodiment of what is lost and might be recovered, or better yet of what has been buried by the accretions of capitalism and its technologies. But if, in emulation of Spenser, the literature of the past is brought forward by Tawney to register a reaction against the beginnings of the modern world, it is well to remember that neither Dante nor Spenser thought that in proposing an alternative they were describing a real possibility. Indeed the writers of fiction to whom I allude here are often more tough-minded about the unreality of the pastoral alternative, more aware of its primarily literary existence, than are most historical and political theorists, a fact of which Tawney was well aware.

In proposing some measure by which to critically place the rise of finance capitalism, Spenser, and Jonson after him, are necessarily allusive to literature and to the myths and metaphors it provides. There is nothing else they could allude or point to. By the time of Spenser, in fact, the older social order was already so fast disappearing that it could be said to exist only *in* the forms of art. Indeed as a general rule it seems as if vital orderings of life become codified into literary mythologies only after they have lost their most pervasive and unselfconscious power over daily existence. As Tawney puts it quite aptly, "the practical implications of the social theory of the Middle Ages are stated more clearly in the sixteenth century than even in its zenith, because they are stated with the emphasis of a creed that is menaced." Spenser's poem is assertively literary, assertively antique in its language, which was meant to be remote even for Spenser's contemporaries. Perhaps this makes of Spenser, and of art, what Marcuse likes to think it is: a realm apart from the erosions of time and therefore a "great negation" of the existing social order. This is a possibility to consider later on. For the moment it is worth noticing that Tawney complicates such a culturally elitist view of art by saying that while the figure behind the genii of beauty was "murky" it was also "indispensable." Exploitative capitalism, that is, subsidized the encapsulation of an alternative

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social order in art. It did so not at all to make art into a "great negation." Quite the contrary. Art served rather to denature any ideas that might, if translated into *action*, have truly constituted a "great negation."

Art proposed that there was indeed a kind of central man buried deep under the accumulations of history and industrial power; it did not propose that he could have any real existence or that he in fact ever did. The aesthetics of radicalism has a source in English literature of the sixteenth century, then, even in its key images. Leaving aside the obvious fact that since that time the idea of the self has gone through extraordinary mutations, we nonetheless find in most essentially radical writers (like Marcuse, Mailer, Reich, or Brown), and in such nineteenth-century predecessors as Melville (for the pessimistic strain working in Mailer), or Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau, the association of capitalistic enterprise with accumulation, with dross. It produces the filthy lucre whose history is brilliantly traced by Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death*, the excrement and pollution which bury the essential self, the natural being.

While we now live in a time when a report from the Club of Rome entitled "The Limits of Growth" shows statistically that pollution is growing exponentially, that it doubles every so often, as does population every thirty-three years, it is impressive that long before any such findings were made, the metaphors of multiple pollutants as a result of growth were fixed in the literary imagination. So much so that they scarcely changed, regardless of how conditions might have been changed between, say, Spenser and Lawrence, who can write in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* that "this is history. One England blots out another. The mines had made the halls wealthy. Now they were blotting out the cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical." And when Connie notices that the miners are only "the gray half of a human being" and that Mellors is the son of such a man, she corrects herself so as to allow for the so-called saving remnant in the lower classes always necessary to the radical imagination: "Not quite. Forty years had made a difference, an appalling difference

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in manhood. The iron and the coal had eaten into the bodies and souls of the men." Only by keeping off to the side of onrushing industrial and technological momentum is it possible to escape that internalization of external mechanization which is implicit in Lawrence's metaphor and what will later be expressed in the metaphors of "armoring" in the works of Wilhelm Reich. Mellors is as rare a type in Lawrence's England as are White Negro Hips in Mailer's America. Indeed Mailer's description of the hipster, which occurs in *The White Negro* soon after a citation of both Lawrence and Wilhelm Reich as intellectual antecedents, involves the same complications that attend Lawrence's description of Mellors. Mailer first places the White Negro in a doomed class, only then to insist on a measure of difference which both clinches the value of the type and makes it the more precarious within the whole culture:

> It may be fruitful to consider the hipster as a philosophical psychopath, a man interested not only in the dangerous imperatives of his psychopathy but in codifying, at least for himself, the suppositions on which his inner universe is constructed. By this premise the hipster is a psychopath, and yet not a psychopath but the negation of the psychopath, for he possesses the narcissistic detachment of the philosopher, that absorption in the recessive nuances of one's own motives which is so alien to the unreasoning drive of the psychopath. In this country, where millions of psychopaths are developed each year, stamped with the mint of our contradictory popular culture (where sex is sin and yet sex is paradise), it is as if there has been room already for the development of the antithetical psychopath who extrapolates from his own condition, from the inner certainty that his rebellion is just, a radical vision of the universe which thus separates him from the general ignorance, reactionary prejudice, and self-doubt of the more conventional psychopath . . . for Hip is the sophistication of the wise primitive in a giant jungle, and so its appeal is still beyond the civilized man. If there are ten million Americans who are more or less psychopathic (and the figure is most modest), there are probably not more than one hundred thousand men and women who consciously see themselves as hipsters, but their importance is that they are an elite with the potential ruthlessness of an elite, and a language most adolescents can understand instinctively, for the hipster's

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intense view of existence matches their experience and their experience and their desire to rebel.

Along with the emphasis here on rebellion as a consequence of radical vision, is the vocabulary of the buried or repressed life struggling to get out: as in the references to "his inner universe," "the recessive nuances of one's own motives," "inner certainty that his rebellion is just," "the wise primitive in a giant jungle." The Hipster is someone who is capable of acting, as the psychopath is not, in order to free himself from the "hopeless contradictions he knew as an infant." He wants, in Mailer's words, to give expression "to the buried infant in himself . . . he is looking for the opportunity to grow up a second time." The Hipster is thus not simply a pastoral figure. He is also his own pastoralist. He is both the child and the figure who has the sophistication to nurture what is childish in himself, to release it in some ideal form, or at least in a form that has been less minted than have most others by contemporary culture.

The influence of Wilhelm Reich on Mailer's radicalism is conspicuous in the emphasis, as in *An American Dream*, on orgiastic potency, the capacity, in Reich's words, "for surrender in the acme of sexual excitation in the natural sexual act." It is evident, too, in the stress given a presumably entrapped or buried natural self. Reich uses the term "armoring" to describe this entrapment. "The character structure of man of today," he writes, "who is perpetuating a patriarchal, authoritarian culture some four to six thousand years old——is characterized by *an armoring against nature within himself and against social misery outside himself.*" One can better understand some of the recently publicized differences between B. F. Skinner, author of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, and Noam Chomsky in these terms. Chomsky believes, and Skinner does not, in the existence of an armored or buried self, though Chomsky would locate it (with a confidence of scientific verification) in measurable workings of the human brain. Chomsky's innateness hypothesis is that man has within him some special and distinguishing capacities that are not subject to environmental manipulation. If this hypothesis seems to be at odds with Chomsky's political conviction that the system is oppressive to the

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very extent that it does succeed in manipulating men and nations into hopeless and ludicrous situations, like Vietnam, then this is no more perplexing than the argument of other radicals, who must claim some irreducible power of persistence for the "inner man" in order even to imagine that some external power is destroying it. He is in the potentially self-contradictory position of arguing against the powers of technological and political manipulation and at the same time insisting, as against Skinner's behaviorism, that environmental manipulation cannot order the world if it ignores certain innate capacities unique to human beings.

Because Chomsky's hypothesis of innate capacity is based entirely on theories of language and corresponding structures in the brain, he is often rather imperviously glib about the possibilities of change in the external systems. Since it can be shown that the United States is acting illogically, then the United States should simply stop acting illogically. Someone like Reich, on the other hand, puts his stress on sexuality and on the damage to it of "four to six thousand years" of "authoritarian culture." His radicalism is thus similar in its diagrammatic shape to Chomsky's but much less optimistic. "Psychic disturbances," he writes, "are the results of the sexual chaos brought about by the nature of society. This chaos has, for thousands of years, served the function of making people submissive to existing conditions, in other words of internalizing the external mechanizations of life." Curiously enough, Chomsky's refutations of Skinner are based on an implicit optimism. And this is derived from the total indifference to sexuality which distinguishes his radicalism from that of Reich, or Mailer, or Lawrence, or Brown. It is their inquiry into sex which convinces them that external mechanizations can be injuriously internalized. His rejection of behaviorism depends on the assumption that there remains something "in" us that is not subject to controls, even the deadening controls that are an essential reference for most radical analyses.

Radicalism customarily assumes that nature needs to be saved from technological forces that intrude upon and sully it. Everywhere in Mailer and Lawrence, in Brown and Reich, are metaphors having to do with the geography of depth, of margins, and of movement outward. If we are to believe the radical geography of

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the self and society there is something buried in each of us, buried in the corporate self; and it follows that these saving elements may reside in those who have benefited least from technological systems and who are therefore least corrupted by it, like the blacks, the poor, the Chinese of the mainland. Perhaps one should include the children of the privileged who now find less reality in the comforts won by their parents in the caves of Mammon than in roughing it, in simplicity, and, not long ago, like latter-day Guyons, in disruption.

Indeed, according to this geography, one moves toward the center of power——the Bower of Bliss or the Pentagon——*only* to disrupt it. Otherwise the effort is to move as far from the center as possible. Electric media have made it increasingly difficult to escape the gravitational pull of the center. In the 1940s Isaac McCaslin in Faulkner's *The Bear*, acting as if he had read the Agrarian program laid down in *I'll Take My Stand*, could carry out his initial act of relinquishment by leaving behind the instruments of power——his watch, his compass, his stick——in order to merge with a wilderness that is threatened but still uncorrupted. When Mailer's boys, Tex and D.J., try nearly the same thing in *Why Are We In Vietnam?* the only wilderness not yet contaminated by what they call "the mixed-up shit of corporation land" is the utterly hostile region of the Arctic range. Full of an electronic magnetism that duplicates in its effect the electronic media that have already taken possession of the boys' minds, the North sends out a message only to go forth and kill.

Mailer's obsessive fear of technology——to the point where the word has become a tiresome catchall——is extreme even within the radical spectrum. But he is also different from most other radicals of his period in his acknowledgment in *The White Negro* "that no matter how crippled or perverted an image of man was the society he had created, it was nonetheless his creation, his collective creation (at least his collective creation from the past) and if society was so murderous, then who could ignore the most hideous of questions about his own nature." This is a position which hardly allows for much radical confidence in a buried self uncontaminated by encrustation of "system." Mailer's position is not argued with any logical stringency, and depends finally on

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rather familiar theological and literary mumbo jumbo. If the inner self is possibly corrupt, as Mailer conceives of it, if it is the producer of the systems that then turn around upon it and corrupt it further, it is also——and more importantly——mysterious. Indeed, it is so mysterious, so as yet unexplored——after four to six millennia, as Reich would have it——that one must not even use the products of technology, like drugs and antibiotics, to keep it going.

Here we get an example of the absurdity, for me, of the radical position about the inner man, the homunculus, as Skinner derisively calls it. Because if Mailer is less offensive than Marcuse in being now and then more alive to individuals and to redemptive particularities, if he seems——as Marcuse never does——at least to have talked to some of the people who are treated by Marcuse with such pastoral certitude and condescension, he nevertheless seeks rhetorical refuge in elitist abstractions. This is especially noticeable throughout *The Prisoner of Sex*, where he is preposterously talking not about the experience of sex in time, on Monday or Tuesday or Saturday, but about sex in space, in a cartoon, a Platonic bubble over the head of the unwary copulator. And he is no less anxious to be the Big Time Literary Man in his talk about other kinds of bodily functions, as in his discussion of disease:

> A man brought back from death by chemicals his own body did not manage to provide cannot know afterward if he should be alive. Small matter, you may argue; he is much alive, is he not? But he has lost biological dignity, he is crucially less alive in a part of his mind and body. That is one reason metaphors are not encouraged near to science now, for one would then have to say that the patient is alive, but his soul has died a degree. So the Argument would demand that there be metaphors to fit the vaults of modern experience. That is, in fact, the unendurable demand of the middle of the century, to restore the metaphor, and thereby displace the scientist from his center. (from *Cannibals and Christians*)

Mailer is an aesthetician all-inclusive. For if he is scrupulously unwilling to transfer villainy from the self to society he is quite willing to transfer it to science and technology and then to set

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himself up as the creator of the salvaging literary metaphor. He is Guyon not as chivalrous knight but as existentialist boxer. But there is a human cost to this kind of radicalism which far outweighs its value as literary rhetoric. People have suffered too much from it in the progress of their daily lives. My own feelings were brought into especially sharp focus in a letter from Anita Van Vactor just after she had finished reading Mailer on Kate Millett. "Although it goes against the grain," she wrote, "I might very well when it comes down to biology, back Millett against Mailer. It would, I know it, be as good as backing Lenin against Jefferson, and as a woman, one would be as much betrayed in the end as the proletariat was destroyed. But I see how, for one dizzy moment, you can back your betrayer for the sake of a single insight. I believe——and as a committed if unambitious student of literature am helpless before the belief——that an overwhelming literary imagination has fucked up irrevocably, the truth about sexual biology. If the truth were known, if the truth could be known, the womb is without privilege, the cock is without privilege; the mysterious power of the space within never existed, the ontological power of the cock, the Unhappy Consciousness, never existed. Sexuality is as empty as a Kate Millett could conceive: and if this were known, if I could be delivered out of the lie of female mystery, if Mailer could be delivered out of the lie of male mastery, this world might seem humanized at last. . . . But such a world would seem, for the transitional generation, the only generation that ever counts, so bleak, so deserted of godhead, that one would gladly return to the old cruelties of literature, purely for the sake of its colors."

It might be asked why sexuality matters in a discussion of radicalism. The answer is that the key to any writer's idea of the self and of society, of an inner, more or less unarticulated being and of an outer, overwhelmingly articulated system is probably best located in what can be deduced about the writer's idea of sexuality. Mailer's, very briefly, is inextricably tied to his idea of creativity and this in turn to his idea of the novelist——that is of himself——as the embattled defender of Imagination in a technological age. He associates sex with awe, wonder, guilt——everything, especially the guilt, that Kate Millett would like to get rid of, and that might well be construed as literary trapping. Long

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before *The Prisoner of Sex*, his attack on sexual permissiveness was implicit in his attack on technology. Contraception, one of the by-products of technology and itself an intrusion of technological rationality into the sexual act, has made all kinds of sex relatively equal. Criticizing Paul Goodman in *The Armies of the Night* for having declared "in rough that heterosexuality, homosexuality, and onanism were equal valid forms of activity, best denuded of guilt," Mailer asserts that "the super hygiene of all this mental prophylaxis offended him profoundly. Super hygiene impregnated the air with medicated Vaseline—there was nothing dirty in the damned stuff; and sex to Mailer's idea of it was better off dirty, damned, even slavish! than clean, and without guilt. For guilt was the existential edge of sex. Without guilt, sex was meaningless. One advanced into sex against one's sense of guilt, and each time guilt was successfully defied, one had learned a little more about the contractual relation of one's own existence to the unheard thunders of the deep—each time guilt herded one back with its authority, some primitive awe—hence some creative clue to the rages of the deep—was left to brood about . . . to him it sometimes seemed that much of life and most of society were designed precisely to drive men deeper into onanism and homosexuality; one defied such a fate by sweeping up the psychic profit which derived from the existential assertion of yourself—which was a way of saying that nobody was born a man; you earned manhood provided you were good enough, bold enough."

One hears the galloping steed of John Wayne in the last phrases. Aside from that, the passage and much else in Mailer's talk about sexuality, suggests that precisely because he does find in human nature the sources of the social systems that in turn repress it, he can end up turning that repressive agency into a human attribute. Technology is thus a villain for promising to *release* us from this sense of repression, to release us from guilt. Mailer finds his way back to very old and tired formulas whereby the mystery and dignity of the self is threatened by an overwhelming external power of science and technology. He is more tentative than Wilhelm Reich, who insists that "alienation is not of biological but of social and economic origin" and that "it was not found in human history before the development of the patriarchal social order." But the tentativeness is inconsequential. What matters, for

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the sake of locating the persistent thrust of the radical argument, is that Mailer and Reich assent to the same disposition of forces: human sexuality is on one side, with creativity and mystery as its attendants, and on the other is a technology which shapes a social and economic order ultimately committed to decreation and death. The difference is simply that while for Reich this oppressive power is described in terms of paralysis and armoring and by Brown in terms of waste, especially feces, for Mailer it is described in terms of a denaturalizing cleanliness, of a permissiveness that deprives humans of their distinctive sense of responsibility for the act of creation, and hence of their distinctive sense of guilt.

Mailer's sexual theories would fall easily under the heading of the chapter in *One Dimensional Man* entitled "The Conquest of Unhappy Consciousness: Repressive Desublimation." By "desublimation" Marcuse means that those gratifications which used to be mediated by art, by the church, by custom——and hence by guilt——are now easily and immediately available. You can go at it like rabbits and not worry about the consequences. But what looks like freedom, Marcuse claims, is really a further extension of the bondage imposed by the system. Society——his catchall equivalent to Mailer's technology——now has an interest in your most intimate desires and needs; it knows that the satisfaction of these needs will promote social cohesion and, at last, passivity. Not only can society——or technology——afford to be more generous than ever before with the pleasures it allows; it is manifestly in its own self-interest to be so. Its extensions of liberty are only an intensification of its will to domination.

Now you might want to ask, as I do, domination of what? And if in answer you are told "the domination of erotic energy, of freedom, and dignity," you might want to ask, with Skinner, what these attributes are and indeed where they are. It is here, again, that aesthetics and art play their essential role in the radical argument, whether it be by Marcuse or Mailer or even Jerry Rubin. These threatened human attributes, if such they be, are found at last in art. Increasingly so, because by the very nature of the argument they are being destroyed everywhere else. Thus art in Marcuse is called the "great negation," and in Mailer the very practice of art, of being a Novelist, is elevated to that of a hero

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contending not with windmills but with the whole complex of space exploration at Houston.

This rabid dependence on art is, I think, necessary, if these writers are to get round a contradiction in the radical objection to technology. For if technology is as subtly overwhelming as it is said to be, and if it is now inseparable, for financial and organizational reasons, from repressive political and economic systems, either communistic or capitalistic, then where is one to locate or promote an alternative? Mailer locates an alternative in the activity of art (which is hardly the basis of a political program), and in analogous activities like boxing or the manners of the Hipster; Marcuse locates it more statically in the forms of art, in the classics. Both are staunchly elitist. But what pastoralist is not? Mailer in his discrimination about swinging as against square activity in art is as opposed to popular or mass culture as is Marcuse in his fear that high art will be adulterated by commercialized popularity. Neither one has much trust at all in the masses they would try to rescue from the ravages of technology. This fact is especially glaring in Marcuse because he takes a more complicated, even sometimes optimistic view of technology, while Mailer has increasingly allegorized it as the enemy of the Novelistic Imagination. Sensing benefits in technology for the masses while at the same time being extraordinarily dubious about the ability of the masses not to be corrupted by it, Marcuse has to posit a controlled situation. And the controllers are to be those capable of appreciating and protecting the unadulterated images of high art. What else can he mean when he announces in *An Essay on Liberation* in 1969 that human freedom depends largely on technical progress, on the advancement of science? For this to be true, in view of the alleged repressiveness of technology and science, Marcuse has to imagine the real or potential existence of men and women who are not repressed. We are back to American romantic literature of the nineteenth century, to Emerson, Thoreau, and especially the Whitman of *Democratic Vistas*.

An Essay on Liberation should have (for ears tuned to American literature) an oddly familiar ring. Anyone with even a smattering of Emerson or Whitman will recognize the effort to link the idea of a "new man"——really a figure resurrected from myth and

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literature—with the historical possibilities of a radical change in the direction of history. Like Emerson, Thoreau, or Whitman, Marcuse writes as if the stock images of romantic pastoral could be transformed into reality, into a force which might at last, in Mailer's phrase, determine "the links of cause and effect," the process of evolution. It seems to me that Marcuse has even less justification for thinking so than did these earlier American hopefuls. In prompting their expectations, they at least had what even the materialists took to be a "new world," and it is to be remembered that they were well aware of the illusive quality of the "new world" they imagined.

In *An Essay on Liberation* Marcuse subscribes to one of the manifestos issued by militant students in Paris in May 1968 wherein they assert that "we will no more be governed passively by the laws of science than by those of economics or the imperative of technology"—as if all three had the same status. "Science," they continued, "is an art whose originality is that it has possible applications outside itself." No one who thinks on the terms "art," "applications," and "outside" will be happy with so confidently French a formulation about science, and if it is useful to say this about science it is useful to say it of any activity—of tennis or bullfighting or cooking. Indeed if these supposed "applications" of science "outside itself" are to be beneficial rather than repressive, then other arts, like literature, painting, music, would also need to have applications outside themselves. How else is man to know *how* to "apply" science to his own welfare?

Marcuse and his Paris radicals thus lead us down a familiar path once more. Science and technology can only be of service to man if man himself is renewed, is prepared to know what he needs and what he does not need from science and technology. Otherwise, all technology will do is further stimulate the brutal competition for goods, for the satisfaction of "false needs" which is the present condition calling for radical change. How is this renewal to occur and in what form? Apparently it is to be in accord with some combination of images out of Karl Marx and André Breton, the prophet of surrealism, of a style of art and literature developed principally in the twentieth century which stresses the subconscious or nonrational significance of images arrived at by chance

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effects, by apparently involuntary means. Marcuse thus writes that "in order to become vehicles of freedom, science and technology would have to change their present direction and goals: they would have to be reconstructed in accord with the new sensibility——the demand of the life instinct. Then one could speak of a technology of liberation, product of a scientific imagination free to project and design the forms of a human universe without exploitation and toil. But this *gaia scienza* is conceivable only after the historical break in the continuum of domination——as expressive of the needs of a new type of man."

We are, again, in the terminologies (and paradoxes) of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and later of Lawrence and Wilhelm Reich, and still later, in decadent form, of the country communes and Charles Reich, where it is simple-mindedly assumed that a "new" man does exist and that he has something neatly designated as "consciousness III." In all the earlier writers the idea is accompanied with recognition that only sporadically and by great effort can one achieve anything like a change in consciousness, and Marcuse himself is frequently insistent on the difficulties of giving any practical or historical dimension to what he calls "the new type of man." But when he proposes some of these difficulties in *An Essay on Liberation,* it is only to make them seem like historical anachronisms.

"The idea of a new type of man," he continues, "as the member (though not as the builder) of a socialist society appears in Marx and Engels in the concept of the 'all-round individual,' free to engage in the most varying activities. In the socialist society corresponding to this idea, the free development of individual faculties would replace the subjection of the individual to the division of labor. But no matter what activities the all-round individual would choose, they would be activities which are bound to lose the quality of freedom if exercised *en masse*——and they would be *en masse* for even the most authentic socialist society would inherit the population growth and the mass basis of advanced capitalism. The early Marxian example of the free individuals alternating between hunting, fishing, criticizing, and so on, had a joking-ironical sound from the beginning, indicative of the impossibility [of] anticipating the ways in which liberated human

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beings would use their freedom. However, [this] embarrassingly ridiculous sound may also indicate the degree to which this vision has become obsolete and pertains to a stage of the development of the productive forces which have been surpassed." In other words, the vision of freedom, if not the particular uses of it, is no longer embarrassing or ridiculous. It has become less so not because of political actions or revolutionary agitation. The vision of freedom has become less silly because of changes in modes of production.

Marcuse writes, that is, as if the Great Refusal to conformity, which he has located in the aesthetic values and aesthetic truth of higher culture, merely awaits its opportunity——if it doesn't collapse into pop culture (as he reiteratively fears)——to make a *qualitative* change in the life that is to be made *quantitatively* available by technology. Who, however, is going to create this opportunity? How is it to be made into an historical instead of literary circumstance in a world presumably imbued with "false needs," and rendered incapable of transcending a universe of facts created and validated by technology? The "new type of man" he asserts must have "a different sensitivity as well as consciousness." They would be "men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, follow different impulses; men who have developed an instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness. Such an instinctual transformation is conceivable as a factor of social change only if it enters the social division of labor, the productions relations themselves. They would be shaped by men and women who have the good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous, no longer ashamed of themselves. . . ." It is Whitman once more.

What, again, lets Marcuse assume that such a person might evolve out of a social system which produces the "one-dimensional man" of the book so entitled in 1964? Probably the answer is implicit in the date of *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) with its reference to the events of the preceding spring, especially of May 1968 in Paris. Those events seemed to support Marcuse's theory that no matter how "happy" men might seem to be or even believe themselves to be under collective capitalism or socialized regimentation, they really are not happy. The May uprisings meant that under the false consciousness of contentment there really was some shred of the true consciousness of repression. Again, art is the monumental evidence that hidden in man, in some or in a few,

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is the will to transcend the given world of fact, to redefine these facts in the context, as he would have it in *One Dimensional Man,* of "their arrested and denied possibilities." Indeed we can only *know* men are unhappy, however much they claim not to be, because art makes us aware of the possibilities in men and in facts that have been denied by social and economic systems. Thus the absolute necessity to radicalism of the "aesthetic sense." And by aesthetic Marcuse means both that which pertains to the senses and that which pertains to art, the "life instincts," as he puts it.

So that when he has to face the question of whether or not his concept of the "new type of man" and of that man's transforming powers is not hopelessly utopian, he not only points, in what now seems a pathetically eager way, to the events of May 1968 but more specifically to the connection on that occasion between art and politics: "The concept of the new man as a transforming agent has been the great, real, transcending force, the *idée neuve* in the first powerful rebellion against the whole of the existing society, the rebellion for the total transvaluation of values, for qualitatively different ways of life: the May rebellion in France. The graffiti of the *'jeunesse en colere,'* joined Karl Marx and André Breton; the slogan *'imagination au pouvoir'* went well with *'les comités (soviets) partout'*; the piano with the jazz player stood well between the barricades; the red flag nicely fitted the statue of the author of *Les Misérables*; and striking students in Toulouse demanded the revival of the language of the Troubadours, the Albigensians. The new sensibility has become a political force. It crosses the frontier between the capitalist and the communist orbit; it is contagious because the atmosphere, the climate of the established societies, carries the virus."

So far does Marcuse push his claims for the new sensibility as a source of a new politics and of political action that he proposes something close to what Jerry Rubin was to call "demonstration theater." "The political protest, assuming a total character," Marcuse writes in the Liberation essay, "reaches into a dimension which, as esthetic dimension, *has* been essentially a-political." Similarly, Rubin in his *Yippie Manifesto*——also interestingly enough published, as was *Do It!*, in 1969——declares that "a new economic structure would produce a new man," and he follows this

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assertion with the somewhat perplexing remark that "the new structure will be created by the new man." How is this to be, unless the old structure, in all its ascribed repressiveness, produced the new man who will then produce the new structure?

Rubin's "demonstration theater" as described in his *Yippie Manifesto* is an expression of bombastic assurance about the Protean self. In chorus with other radical writers Rubin asserts that "the mind is programmed," but he is even more confident than the others that somehow we can, as he tells us, "get in there and break that bloody program!" Acting on his own instructions he performs not one but various parts of himself. When refused entrance to the New York Stock Exchange by an official who tells him that "you can't come in. You are hippies and you are coming to demonstrate," he simply changes identities, or rather calls upon one of his other identities, and thereby gains admission. "Hippies? Demonstrate? We're Jews," he retorts. "And we're coming to see the stock market." But he does more than perform parts of himself; he also performs those parts of the culture which others do not want to see "demonstrated." He insists that art or performance can be a distillation, a concentration of the images of life. He thus disrupts the Stock Exchange not by "demonstrating" himself, as it were, but by demonstrating the nature of the Stock Exchange and by forcing some of its habitués to "demonstrate" those parts of themselves which they hide under the style of decorum. He and his friends drop dollar bills from the top of the Exchange and watch "these guys who deal in millions of dollars as a game—chasing and fighting each other for dollar bills thrown by the hippies."

In a curious way unknown to him, Rubin also resembles an earlier American dissident, Henry Thoreau. By punnings and role playings, Thoreau's style is designed to subvert the meaning in his society of, for example, "ownership," just as Rubin catches a number of social absurdities in such puns as "subpoenas envy"; and Rubin believes, even more than did Thoreau, in the possibilities of creating new myths and a new man. "We are a new generation, species, race," he asserts, and seems little concerned with the problem that if contemporary man really is as programmed as he says he is, then Rubin ought to agree with Harold Rosenberg

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who, with a similarly acute sense of the power of style on men's minds, has remarked that "to be a new man is not a contradiction but an effort." Rubin's confidence is derived in some part from his conviction that the power of television "telescopes the revolution by centuries." This may be true, but whose revolution? The styles given preferential room on the screen——if they are as effective on people who really are as vulnerable as Mailer, Marcuse, Rubin, and others suggest——are more likely to produce one-dimensional than Protean man, Yippies, or even a new type of man.

However much I share the radical critique of existing structures and especially the radical contempt of Wilhelm Reich for the sexual repressions upon which the structures rest, the aesthetic criterion of contemporary radicalism in America and Europe seems to me presumptuous about the value of literature and high culture, condescending or ignorant about the native wit and wisdom of ordinary men and women, and elitist in a self-protecting and finally uninquisitive way. Radicalism is failing because it is preposterously afraid of science and technology, with Mailer as a signal instance in *The Prisoner of Sex*. Since he proposes in that book to champion the imagination against science and technology, then it must bluntly be said that the work of Kinsey and of Masters and Johnson does more service to freedom of imagination and the liberation of the mind than this book or, when it comes to sex, Mailer's entire oeuvre. I am not afraid, as a teacher of literature, of sounding like B. F. Skinner when he remarks that "I believe we are controlled, of course. But it is a question of control through volition rather than coercion." Skinner's weakness is that the controls he would make volitional are too simple for the organisms he wants to manage. That criticism can be made of his position——and it is a damning one——*without* subscribing to mythologies about the inner man promoted by literature. It can be made rather on the basis of our persistent ignorance about ourselves, especially about our sexual selves, which is confirmed by science, and on the basis of the very *existence* of science and of literature. Skinner is primarily interested in survival, while the invention of culture proves that we are animals interested in more than survival, or that we are at least willing to take terrible risks with survival.

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To say that, however, need not inexorably direct our exaltations of the species to a literary as distinct from a scientific culture. Part of the fear of technology as expressed in the Shelleyan promotion of art and of the artist is really a fear among certain cultural elitists about the continued predominance of the written word, of literature, and of the edified past. It is odd that contemporary radicalism is——if looked at radically——so finally conservative. But it is. I look in vain for the kind of nice, open, brave remark made by Stanley Kubrick when he was prompted to talk about the affection induced in *2001* for the computer named Hal:

> One of the fascinating questions that arise in envisioning computers more intelligent than men is at what point machine intelligence deserves the same consideration as biological intelligence. Once a computer learns by experience as well as by its original programming, and once it has access to much more information than any number of human geniuses might possess, the first thing that happens is that you don't really understand it any more, and you don't know what it's doing or thinking about. You could be tempted to ask yourself in what way is machine intelligence any less sacrosanct than biological intelligence, and it might be difficult to arrive at an answer flattering to biological intelligence.

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IN THE FIFTIES

Leonard Michaels

GROWING UP

In the fifties: I learned to drive a car. I was frequently in love. I had more friends than now.

When Kruschev denounced Stalin my roommate shit blood, turned yellow, and lost most of his hair.

I attended the lectures of the excellent E. B. Burgum until Senator McCarthy ended his tenure. I imagined N.Y.U. would burn. Miserable students, drifting in the halls, looked at one another.

In less than a month, working day and night, I wrote a bad novel.

I went to school——N.Y.U., Michigan, Berkeley——much of the time.

I had witty, giddy conversation, four or five nights a week, in a homosexual bar in Ann Arbor.

I read literary reviews the way people suck candy.

Personal relationships were more important to me than anything else.

I had a fight with a powerful fat man who fell on my face and was immovable.

I had personal relationships with football players, jazz musicians, ass bandits, nymphomaniacs, nonspecialized degenerates, and numerous Jewish premedical students.

I had personal relationships with thirty-five rhesus monkeys in an experiment on monkey addiction to morphine. They knew me as one who shot reeking crap out of cages with a hose.

With four other students I lived in the home of a chiropractor named Leo.

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I met a man in Detroit who owned a submachine gun; he claimed to have hit Dutch Schultz. I saw a gangster movie that disproved his claim.

I knew two girls who had brains, talent, health, good looks, plenty to eat, and hanged themselves.

I heard of parties in Ann Arbor where everyone made it with everyone else, including the cat.

I knew cardsharps and con men. I liked marginal types because they seemed original and aristocratic, living for an ideal or obliged to live it, whereas ordinary types seemed fundamentally unserious. These distinctions belong to a romantic fop. I didn't think that way too much.

I worked for an evil vanity publisher in Manhattan.

I worked in a fish-packing plant in Massachusetts, on the line with a sincere Jewish poet from Harvard and three lesbians; one was beautiful, one grim; both loved the other who was intelligent. I loved her too. I had dreams of violating her purity. They talked among themselves, in creepy whispers, always about Jung. In a dark corner, away from our line, old Portuguese men slit fish into open flaps, flicking out their bones. I could see only their eyes and knives. I'd arrive early every morning to dash in and out until the stench became bearable. After work I'd go to bed and pluck fish scales out of my skin.

I was a teaching assistant in two English departments and I graded thousands of freshmen themes. One began like this: "Karl Marx, for that was his name. . . ." Another began like this: "In Johnathan Swift's famous letter to the Pope. . . ." I wrote edifying comments in the margins. Later I began to scribble "Awkward" beside everything, even spelling errors.

I got *A*'s and *F*'s as a graduate student. A professor of English said my attitude wasn't professional. He said that he always read "a good book" after dinner.

A girl from Indiana said this of me on a teacher evaluation form: "It is bad enough to go to an English class at eight in the morning, but to be instructed by a shabby man is horrible."

I made enemies on the East Coast, the West Coast, and in the Middle West. All now dead, sick, or out of luck.

I was arrested, photographed, and fingerprinted. In a sound-

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proof room two detectives lectured me on the American way of life, and I was charged with the crime of nothing. A New York cop told me that detectives were called "defectives."

I had an automobile accident. I did the mambo.

In Ann Arbor, a few years before the advent of Malcolm X, a lot of my friends were black. After Malcolm X almost all my friends were white and they admired John F. Kennedy.

In the fifties I smoked marijuana, hash, and opium. Once I drank absinthe. Once I swallowed twenty glycerine caps of peyote. The social effects of "drugs," unless sexual, always seemed tedious. But I liked people who inclined the drug way. Especially if they didn't proselytize. I listened to long conversations about the phenomenological weirdness of familiar reality and the great spiritual questions this entailed——for example, "Do you think Wallace Stevens is a head?"

I witnessed an abortion.

I was godless; I thought the fashion of intellectual religiosity more despicable and wished that I could live in a culture rather than study life among the cultured.

I drove a Chevy Bel Aire eight-five miles per hour on a two-lane blacktop. It was nighttime. Intermittent thick white fog made the headlights feeble and diffuse. Four others in the car sat with the strict, silent rectitude of catatonics. If one of them didn't admit to being terrified we were all dead. A Cadillac, doing a hundred miles per hour, passed us and was obliterated in the fog. I slowed down.

I drank old fashioneds in the apartment of my friend Julian. We talked about Worringer and Spengler. We gossiped about friends. Then we left to meet our dates. There was more drinking. We all climbed trees, crawled in the street, and went to church. Julian walked into an elm, smashed his glasses, vomited on a lawn, and returned home to memorize Anglo-Saxon grammatical forms. I ended on my knees, vomiting into a toilet bowl, repeatedly flushing the water to hide my noises. Later I phoned New York so that I could listen to the voices of my parents, their Yiddish, their English, their logics.

I knew a professor of English who wrote impassioned sonnets in honor of Henry Ford.

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I played freshman varsity basketball at N.Y.U. and received a dollar an hour for practice sessions and double that for games. It was called "meal money." I played badly, too psychological, too worried about not studying, too short. If I were pushed or elbowed during a practice game, I was ready to kill. The coach liked my attitude. In his day, he said, practice ended when there was blood on the boards. I ran back and forth, in urgent sneakers, through my freshman year. Near the end I came down with pleurisy, quit basketball, and started smoking more.

I took classes in comparative anatomy and chemistry. I took classes in Old English, Middle English, and modern literature. I took classes and classes.

I fired a twelve-gauge shotgun down the hallway of a railroad flat into a couch pillow.

My roommate bought the shotgun because of his gambling debts. He expected murderous thugs to come for him. I'd wake in the middle of the night listening for a knock, a cough, a footstep, wondering how to identify myself as not him when they broke through our door. He was an expensively dressed kid from a Chicago suburb. Though very intelligent he suffered in school. He suffered with girls though he was handsome and witty. He suffered with boys though he was heterosexual. He slept on three mattresses and used a sunlamp all winter. He bathed, oiled, and perfumed his body daily. He wanted soft, sweet, sensuous joys in every part, but when some whore asked if he'd like to be beaten with a garrison belt he said yes. He suffered with food, eating from morning to night, loading his pockets with fried pumpkin seeds when he left for class, smearing caviar paste on his filet mignons, eating himself into a monumental face of eating because he was eating. Recently he killed himself.

A shocking number of young, gifted people, whom I knew in the fifties, killed themselves and only a few of them continue walking around.

I wrote literary essays in the turgid, tumescent manner of darkest Blackmur.

I used to think that someday I would write a fictional version of my stupid life in the fifties.

I was a waiter in a Catskill hotel. The captain of the waiters

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ordered all dining room staff to dance, after dinner, with female guests who appeared in the casino without escorts, and, as much as possible, fuck them. A professional "toomler" walked the grounds. Wherever he saw a group of people merely chatting he thrust in quickly and created a tumult.

I heard the Budapest String Quartet, Dylan Thomas, Lester Young and Billy Holliday together, and I saw Pearl Primus dance, in a Village nightclub, in a space two yards square, accompanied by an African drummer about seventy years old. His hands moved in spasms of mathematical complexity at invisible speed. People left their tables to press close to Primus and see the expression on her face, the sweat, the muscles, the way her naked feet seized and released the floor.

Eventually I had friends in New York, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Berkeley, and Los Angeles.

I did the cha-cha, wearing a tux, at a new year's party in Hollywood, and sat at a table with Steve McQueen. He'd become famous in a TV series about a cowboy with a rifle. He said he didn't know which he liked best——acting or driving a racing car. I thought he was a silly person and then realized he thought I was. I met a few other famous people who said something. One night, in a yellow Porsche, I circled Manhattan with Jack Kerouac. He recited passages, perfectly remembered from his book reviews, to the sky. His manner was ironical, sweet, and depressing.

I had a friend named Chicky who drove his chopped, blocked, stripped, dual-exhaust Ford convertible, while vomiting out the fly window, into a telephone pole. He survived, lit a match to see if the engine were all right, and it blew up in his face. Through his bandages he said that he'd been trying to kill himself since high school. Because his girl friend wasn't good-looking enough. He was crying and laughing while he pleaded with me to believe that he really had been trying to kill himself because his girl friend wasn't good-looking enough. I told him that I was going out with a certain girl and he told me that he had fucked her once but that it didn't matter because I could take her away and live somewhere else. He was a Sicilian kid with a face like Caravaggio's angels of debauch. He'd been educated by priests and nuns. When his hair grew back and his face healed, his mind healed. He broke

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up with his girl friend. He wasn't nearly as narcissistic as other men I knew in the fifties. I knew one who, before picking up his dates, ironed his dollar bills and powdered his testicles. And another who referred to women as "cockless wonders" and used only their family names——for example, "I'm going to meet Goldberg, the cockless wonder." Many women thought he was extremely attractive and became his sexual slaves. Men didn't like him.

I had a friend who was dragged down a courthouse stairway, in San Francisco, by her hair. She'd wanted to attend the House Un-American hearings. The next morning I crossed the Bay Bridge to join my first protest demonstration. I felt frightened and embarrassed. I was bitter about what had happened to her and the others she'd been with. I expected to see thirty or forty people like me, carrying hysterical placards around the courthouse until the cops bludgeoned us into the pavement. About two thousand people were there. I marched beside a little kid who had a bag of marbles to throw under the hooves of the horse cops. His mother kept saying, "Not yet, not yet." We marched all day. That was the end of the fifties.

Marge Piercy

THROUGH THE CRACKS

I. *A protracted adolescence, a foreshortened perspective*

I think I have some notion how growing up in the fifties compared with growing up in the sixties, because I arranged to have two adolescences, one at the normal age, and one again in the sixties, in SDS. Growing up in the fifties: I never could, exactly. Part of maturing is strengthening a sense of I as an identity and a strong project, and then blending that into some larger We. Being

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an adult involves a bonding with a community, and therefore of history and progeny, a meshing with time, a sense of struggling and yielding, shaping and being shaped in that river.

In the fifties I found myself a perennial adolescent, isolated, stuck in the alienated pose of an individual in a hostile environment. History had ended in the American apotheosis; it was only a matter of time (and struggle with the forces of evil) before the rest of the world became just like Our Town with cigarette commercials. I remember my best friend's brother-in-law yelling at her, "You aren't satisfied with anything. What do you want, to go live with savages in a cave in Italy?" Changing this country felt inconceivable. Politics was voting. The long ice age of General Motors, General Foods, General Eisenhower, and general miasma: the only choices were conformity or exile. I could not imagine a future. Only sci-fi freaks were into that, and mostly their future looked like the old frontier with shinier gadgets. My own actions of protest against the distribution of wealth, rights, power were doomed to be symbolic and abortive.

Survival was hard enough. It was harder to be poor then than now, I think, although of course that is a snotty judgment eased by the fact that I am no longer poor. There was no support for choosing anything other than a narrowly defined norm. There was no subculture to drop into especially, especially for women. (To an independent woman the enclaves of beat and hep were more piggish than the straight world.) Still, beyond survival or a clubby grouping of nervous politics played by Robert's Rules, the only actions I could see were gesture, bordering on prank. My anger was enormous, when I was in touch with it at all, but the isolated gestures available trivialized it: soapsuds in a fountain, a faked news story, refusing to use footnotes or keep hours, taking off my clothes. Either you got away with it because you didn't get caught so it might as well not have happened, or you did it publicly and were promptly punished.

The end of ideology produced a world in stasis. Actually the fifties represented the last gasp of WASP history as history: the history of the affluent white male Western European and latterly American presence in the world given to us as the history of humankind; Western European culture of the better off sold us as

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Culture. This battle is still continuing, and most of what is taught in school is still official cult, but at least now it is being challenged. The vast rest of us were deviations from the norm. I call the fifties the end of that but what a fat squat end. What a grey smug tight world. Everything that moved me at first contact (Whitman, Dickinson) turned out to be déclassé or irrelevant to the mainstream, the tradition. It was not, of course, a mainstream that had produced me, a tradition to which I was a natural heir. I would never be a gentleman.

What a need to tidy everything, librarianlike. Everything in art was taught as fitting somewhere in a vast hierarchy. The Great Chain of Being seemed still intact. Even the lawns were Christian. Human nature was a universal constant, each of us with her heart of darkness. In this period of successful identification of ruling class interests seamlessly with the interests of "the people" (who were the images on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*) the concept of American classlessness was being pushed at the same time that critics like Lionel Trilling were calling for a novel of manners: meaning literature *interior* to the world of the affluent. The defeat of Marxist literary criticism and theory meant rejection of the class struggle and somehow even of working class experience as a viable theme. Yet class was a fact of my life, something I brooded over constantly in childhood every time I took the Joy Road or Tireman buses in Detroit and noted how if you went downtown there were even more blacks than in our neighborhood and housing got worse and worse, and if you went the other direction there was more space, more trees, yards, single-family brick houses, parks. If I had come to college never having thought about poverty, born out of an egg the day before, going to college was a never-ending education in the finer distinctions of class insult and bias. It kept kicking me in the teeth.

When characters who were not white, male, and affluent appeared in the literature we read, including novels of the time, they were all image and mythology, when not comic relief. When a character was black, generally she represented something in the white writer's psyche——nature, evil, death, life, fecundity. Like Indians. Like women to this day. Such beings were never assumed to have an inner reality equal and coherent to the white male

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writer. Now we begin to have a diversity of culture to begin to match our different realities, values, lives.

Yes, the world was a dead egg. I felt impacted. Nothing would ever move or change. All that could be imagined was slipping off somewhere special like near Sartre, where things were obviously more vital; or wriggling through the cracks, surviving in the unguarded interstices. There was no support for opting out of the rat race or domesticity. On the other hand, it was easier in some ways to get by; i.e., shoplifting was pitifully easy in the fifties, with none of the organized and increasingly mechanized war between stores and customers that goes on now, only store dicks and a few mirrors. What people conceived of as possible for them to do was small: the possible lives seemed only two or three, like the differences between men's sport jackets or suits. Marry or die! The painfully slow process of work in communities that has produced a smattering of free clinics, drop-in centers, women's centers, hot-lines, abortion referral services, pregnancy counseling, law communes, food co-ops, switchboards, alternate schools, wasn't even a gleam in an organizer's eye. If you got sick, suicidal, depressed, in trouble, pregnant, hungry, you were on your own. I remember eating flour and water for four days during vacation in the university town, trying to pry my paycheck loose. Now there would always be someplace I could get a meal. Kids take slightly, slightly more care of each other; the subculture trains folks to pretend at least to care.

There was, I think, more general sense of intellectual adventure in the fifties, for books were one of the only escapes to Otherwise. About the only perspectives available for projecting a reality alien to Plainfield U.S.A. came from steeping oneself in Alexandrian Neoplatonists or the habits of the army ant. When I was nineteen, some of the most alive people I met were university types, giving off an intellectual electricity. I would never make that judgment now. That perspective lent to purely verbal or mental adventuring a glamour it no longer has for me. For if you cannot conceive of doing anything to alter your world, you reserve your admiration for manipulating concepts about those who have done something, or even for those who manipulate concepts about others who have manipulated concepts. I was particularly fasci-

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nated by scientists (and in graduation panic married a physicist) because they seemed elected to have some effect. I would then sometimes derive a heady excitement from the distance between my intellectual labors and everything visible to me. Partly no doubt that was due to a naive working-class based zest for "real learning" which had to be esoteric to assure me that I was being truly educated. But some had to do with advanced learning in the various disciplines (that word! It conjured up for me then an almost Marquis de Sade shiver: I was crazy about that word at nineteen) representing an available exit from a crushingly repressive world. A world in which the Left was dead (or comically irrelevant: meetings of five socialists representing five factions, all competing in anti-Communist pieties) was for me a world without historical movement and a world without hope.

My existence in the English Department at Michigan was exceedingly perilous and bumpy. One of my teachers there who is now at Syracuse said when some students wanted to invite me to read a couple of years ago, over his dead body. I was a garlic among the Anglican-convert lilies. I felt the wrong shape, size, sex, volume level, class, and emotional coloration. I fought, always with a sense of shame, for I could never define what I felt was being throttled in me. And I wanted approval. I loved working in the dim mustily fragrant stacks of the library, safe, busy. I loved the old clanking conveyor belt that delivered books up to the desk when requested (and chewed up a number of books as we found out the night we snuck into the space at the bottom). It was ancient, noisy, did not work well, had a certain wrought iron charm, and impressed upon me the privilege of being in its presence at all: something of a makeshift image for my education.

In graduate school at Northwestern suddenly things came easily. As soon as I passed my master's exam with a record score, I got scared. I can look at my fright one way as conventional female programming. I was married to a graduate student in physics. I dropped out to support him, although I was a better student. Failure brings emotional rewards to women; success brings penalties. Indeed all the men in my department used to insult me whenever they could get through.

But I wanted to write. I knew I was writing badly. I could

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not produce two lines without making five literary allusions, punning in Elizabethan English and dragging in some five-dollar word like *chiaroscuro*. I was assimilating. Graduate school represented the first financial security I had ever known (which may sound weird to you, but meant a meal ticket to me). I knew I could hack it and then I'd be safe, I thought. Actually now I see how shaky are the positions of women in universities, Ph.D. or not, fired just before tenure, shunted into cleanup courses. I didn't have the savvy then to guess that security might not apply to me. But it scared me anyhow and not entirely because I feared success. That wasn't success to me. It was just security.

Success was telling some truth, creating some vision on paper. I had to go back to my own roots somehow before I lost a sense of myself. I lived in Uptown in Chicago, on Wilson Avenue in a poor white neighborhood the JOIN project of SDS was later to work in. I was laboring for a sense of my self, origins, prospects, antecedents, intentions, a renewed sense of a living language natural to my mouth, even a mythology I could use. Some I tried to read from the city streets, some from my grim jobs, some from the library again. On a borrowed card I sought a mythology that centered on women. From 1958 through 1960 I read everything I could get into my hands on the mother goddess religions, mandalas, matriarchy, Crete, Amazons, Isis, Ishtar, Diana, Artemis, Cybele, Demeter. I read Margaret Murray on witches and poured over Jung's illustrations. It was all useless. I could not assimilate it usefully. I could not write out of what soaked dark and wet and fecundating into my brain. I could not make connections. Now of course the emerging women's culture draws on this stuff. But to be interested in Demeter in 1958 wasn't to be a precursor but to be mad, objectively irrelevant. Just as there was no community to mediate for me between individual and mass, there was nobody to write for, nobody to communicate with about matters of being female, alive, thinking, trying to make sense of one's life and times. I wrote novel after novel, poem after poem for no one: to lack a context and to create is to be objectively mad.

Within a year after leaving school I broke out of the box of my marriage. I remember my husband demanding to know what I wanted in leaving him, and yelling that I was pursuing a phoenix.

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He told me that both he and his shrink agreed I needed help badly, was frigid (I no longer wanted to sleep with him) and pursuing neurotic fancies. I stood there flat-footed and suddenly I could see the cramped, starved, supportive housewife relationship with my husband side-by-side with earlier, freer bondings with other men, and I started to laugh. He tried to tie the divorce to my being willing to go to his shrink or a shrink his shrink would choose, but I just left. I am surprised considering how timid and malleable I was then where the strength emerged to laugh and walk out, to cling to my own flimsy reality against official reality, husband reality, shrink reality, newspaper reality, sociological reality, the reality of everybody I knew telling me I was a self-destructive fool to walk out of such a good marriage. Good for what, I asked? I think only a hunger for reality, a large omnivorous curiosity that had led me to a certain breadth of experience by twenty-two gave me a courage based on having at least some few things to compare other things to.

That comparison was generally lacking: a sense of possibilities, of alternate universes of social discourse, of other assumptions about what was good or primary, of other viable ways of making a living, making love, having and raising children, being together, living, and dying. There was little satisfaction for me in the forms offered, yet there seemed no space but death or madness outside the forms.

II. *Femininity as a persistent discomfort, like a headcold*

Surely seldom has the role of women been more painful, the contradictions more intense, than they were in the fifties, when the full force of the counterrevolution struck us. Sick was a cant word of the fifties: if you were unhappy, if you wanted something you couldn't have easily or that other people did not want or wouldn't admit to wanting, if you were angry, if you were different, strange, psychic, emotional, intellectual, political, double-jointed: you were sick, sick, sick.

Women's clothing of the fifties, the purchased or stolen trappings of my adolescence: a litany of rubber, metal bands, garters, boning, a rosary of spandex and lycra and nylon, a votive candle of elastic, I consecrate to you. I think you were sick.

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The skirts were long and clumsy. How we waded through summer as they hung from us in fat folds muffling our thin hips and flat behinds as if we were matrons vast as car barns. But sweaters were tight. Through the sweater you could see ridges of brassiere like targets for gunnery practice, through the fluorescent pilled nylon (like goosepimples), the more affluent pastel cashmeres (kept under the bed in trunks by girls in my dormitory, fingered like gold: a nice suburban girl counted her wealth, her worth in cashmeres), the ubiquitous flat lambswool cardigans and pullovers, playing their demure mother and daughter acts under the false teeth of pearls.

Sacky tweed skirts, little grey suits in which no one looked real. What you were supposed to wear to job interviews, along with some hat, white shoes, white gloves. In my drawer were two pairs of white gloves never worn except at job interviews: some mad connection between being paid $1.35 an hour to type and carrying a pair of white gloves. Purity. Virginity. We used to rub chalk on them to make them white.

The other choice besides the acres of swishing skirt was called a sheath. Those were alluring gowns into which we crept, first having squashed flat the belly, the hips, the waist, slowly, slowly, toothpaste cramming back into the tube. If a zipper broke, we spilled out. Bottles filled with our fizzing blood or stale water, it did not matter; they stood alone, their sex so much more definite than our own, hard and horny as the carapace of beetles. Our flesh served them in bondage: the bondage of which all these clothes speak.

What is a woman walking on high heels? What is a giraffe on roller skates? The platform shoes clumping along now depress me. Spike heels used to turn ankles and break legs regularly, catching in gratings, escalators, cracks at elevator doors, stairway treads. Who grows tumid at clumsy mincing, at the warped back of a woman bobbing stiffly—who cannot run if she has to, who is hobbled, distorted, learning to endure pain?

Longline brassieres underneath staved in the ribs, shoved the stomach up into the esophagus, raised the rigid breasts till their padded peaks brushed the chin. Breasts were hard and shiny as the apple stuck in the mouth of the roast suckling pig. Strapless bras-

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sieres dug into the skin to leave a red welt encircling. If you reached upward, if you moved suddenly, the bra would remain anchored like a granite ledge. The freed breasts would pop out. Suddenly you stood, Diana of Ephesus with four boobs. I remember my dormitory friend murmuring scorn of the boyfriend who thought he had caressed her breast in the twilit lounge. All he had contacted was Playtex padded perfect circle size 34A.

Girdles: my mother bought me one when I turned twelve, saying to me that now I was a woman. I weighed ninety-two pounds and cast no shadow standing sideways. Rubber coffins. They were diving machines that made of air a sticky sea to founder in. Who could eat with pleasure in a girdle? I remember pain at restaurant tables, the squirming, the itching, the overt tweaking and plucking. Who could dance? Run or bend over or climb a ladder? Fuck? Scratch? No, in a girdle you stand and stand. You sit rigidly and nothing jiggles, nothing bounces. You are looked at like an avocado tree in a lobby. The pallid flesh sweats coldly under the rubber mask with its smell of doctors' offices and baby cribs.

What do these costumes say with their high, conical breasts, deep waistlines, flat rib cages, and no bellies at all——no wombs, in there, nothing to digest with? Girdles that chafed the thighs raw. It is not trivia, this catalogue of out-of-fashion clothes that arouse lust in middle-aged men. These costumes say that flesh must be confined, must suffer in rigidity. Women must accustom themselves to a constant state of minor pain, binding themselves in a parody of the real body to be constantly "attractive." A woman must never be able to use her body freely.

Before this armory of underwear, flesh was quelled, cowed. It had the shape divine. We didn't have bodies then, we had shapes. We were the poor stuff from which this equipment carved the feminine. Under all this clothing our meat, imprinted with seams and chafed with elastic, shuddered and waited in ignorance. Our bodies were blind worms, helpless under rocks. Secretly they turned to muscle or to flab as they would, but the clothes jailed us, trained us to await babies and cancer and rape, dumb as a centerpiece of wax fruit. I feel less vulnerable naked than in those trappings.

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III. *Daddy, Mommy, and The Bomb*

The Bomb: like God, a central presence, hefty as in the Herblock cartoons. With the ever escalating arms race and military budgets, the chances of the world blowing up today are at least as great, but nobody talks of it. It's boring. At least we were obsessed with the probability. But it blocked political thinking. It made us afraid of Them who presumably would drop their bomb on us rather than afraid of Us, who were our business to control and who policed us into complicity.

I used to dream eschatologically, New York Harbor choked with charred corpses, the blackened pit that had been Detroit. During my freshman year we spent time, the three of us roommates, fantasizing about what we would do when the bomb fell on Detroit. We had a feeble scheme of stealing horses from a nearby riding stable and heading north to the woods to live off the land ——something we had as much idea how to do as construct an atomic pile. That was a big time for lists of necessary supplies to keep in the basement.

I suspect one of the grand sexual fantasies of the fifties was survival with a few choice members of the opposite sex——or same if you were gay. Miraculously saved in Mammoth Cave where you happened to be visiting at the time with a party composed only of you and whomever you wanted. It would be the end of anxiety. The worst would have come true and all the rules gone out the window. Back to the simple life to try it all again. Or wait for the end with fun and games. In any event it too was an outlet, a source of change in a static world. A persistent and obsessive fantasy I found in at least half the men I was involved with in those years.

I think people generally expect less of sex now and that works out better. If a woman obeyed Freud and togetherness and gave up everything for her femininity, she expected the earth to move and the sky to fall in bed. Men who conformed to the corporate image on the job expected to go home to warmth, intimacy, and a personal geisha.

Living was personalized, privatized. You had problems. Everything seemed to go on in small boxes. It was a time dominated by a Freudian theology of biology and childhood as fate. I

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don't believe there are greater incidences of rape and impotence now than in the fifties. I was a bit outside, and people came to me in crises. It was assumed I would know the abortionist or what to do. I functioned in that way for years, repository of sexual lore, like a crazy bank where people left stuff they didn't really want, to molder and gather slow interest. Then, as now, a great many women were forcibly raped, and then (as now enforced by the society and the law but just beginning to be fought by women), women were ashamed of that violence done to them and believed, as programmed, that to be violently entered was somehow their fault. The incidence of male impotence has always been high among any class of men I've ever known, age, background, race, level of education regardless. I suspect from conversations with much older women that it's held constant since 1910 at least. But nobody talked about it then. Men did not talk honestly to men, women did not talk honestly enough to women. Men talked to women individually but with a mixture of confession, propaganda, blame laying, and demand.

The myth of the vaginal orgasm (big bang theory of femininity) did enormous damage. It not only produced a generation of women alienated from their bodies, trained to deny actual pleasure and to act out fancied orgasms, but alienated from their minds, since generally in order to function and "be happy" in relations with men, women had to believe they were experiencing "fulfillment" in bed.

Mutually exclusive sex roles divided humanity into winners and losers, makers and made, doers and done, fuckers and fuckees, yin and yang, and who the hell wants to be passive, moist, cold, receptive, unmoving, inert: sort of a superbasement of humanity. Women still police each other, to keep each other in line, as men too police women, the range of permissible behavior for women remaining much narrower than for men. But women policed each other in the fifties with a special frenzy, being totally convinced nothing but death and madness lay outside the nuclear family and the baby-doll-mommy roles. How could we have believed that when we saw the toll of death and madness inside the roles?

Even the notion of acceptable beauty was exceedingly limited and marred a whole generation of women who grew up

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knowing they did not embody it (training in self-hatred) and a whole generation of men who felt they were entitled to it, and any actual woman not resembling the few idols was very second-best: or Everyman has the right to the exclusive possession of Marilyn Monroe. Just as the sex roles have widened, slightly, and loosened, a minute amount, so the range of people who grow up thinking themselves physically acceptable has increased perceptibly. Kinky hair is fine, afros are fine, straight hair is fine, you don't have to wear falsies any more. The common physical conditions still persecuted include being fat and ordinary signs of aging, i.e., flesh being less than brand-new as if from a machine shop.

What we were trained to respond to sexually in men can be roughly divided into two types. One was the Sensitive Hood, mean, destructive, self-destructive, sadistic but suffering. The other was Iceman: now Iceman might be the Cold War cowboy, the suntanned tycoon; or might be the more ectomorphic intellectual with cheekbones and an ascetic air. But he was cold through and through, he was ungiving Daddy, the block of stone, destructive but not usually self-destructive. The perfect tool of empire, whether in his study or his factory or his trenchcoat. The essence of each was the inability to love, to feel in a useful way, while retaining the ability (usually) to act. The Sensitive Hood, the existential darling, feels but only pain or the pleasure of giving pain. A generation of women was raised to impale themselves on knives or pound themselves mushy on rocks, while fantasizing to order about womanly fulfillment, surrender, and the big bang orgasm. It would make me weep if I hadn't had to live through it, wondering what was hitting me. One is the Sinful Son and the other the Terrible Father, basically Puritan ghouls, competitive, alienated, death-dealing and empty, empty in the soul, useless to the preservation of life. Egoistic in quite different styles: insensitivity trained by the grueling rituals of American manhood, or narcissism ogling itself in the shine of a switchblade (usually imaginary).

The only road back from pouring affection down a rat hole lay in your children: creative motherhood. Of course we are approaching the great double bind by which a mother must give all of her attention all of the time to her children while they are

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growing up lest they become drug-dealing preverts, but a possessive mother kills . . .

We had not the active paranoia we have learned through the sixties and seventies, the Pychonesque government plot involving the CIA, the Mafia, the White House, and ITT: the knowledge that behind the bland or incoherent violent facade of newspaper "events" lie unimaginable writhings of interlocked directorates of multinational corporations. No, the facade was entire in the fifties: every Corinthian column in its place and nobody on the white marble steps but the D.A. taking his oath. Our paranoia was, first, petty: that "they," i.e., the FBI, would immediately know if I talked to a Communist or took Engels's *On the Family* out of the library. While I was at Michigan there was a minor furor when a student confessed to her boyfriend that the FBI had scared her into giving them a list of everyone who came to his many parties, for he was . . . an avowed Marxist! When I arranged for Pete Seeger to give his first concert there in many years, I felt incredibly cheeky. It was playing poker with monopoly money. The political dimension had been crushed from our lives, making it impossible to think about community, the state, the economy, history in any vital way.

The paranoia was massive on another level: enemyless. Life would get you. Life was obviously in the employ of J. Edgar Hoover and the *Ladies' Home Journal*. The conception of human nature was narrow: we are only now engaged in trying to knock it more open again. People were cardboard good, or inherently darkly evil. People may kill themselves more now, but they don't jaw endlessly about it.

The fifties, I cannot sentimentalize them. I hardly survived them. The idea that they might come back in some forms appears ahistorical to me but terrifying, like seeing a parade bearing my coffin down the street. They were a mutilating time to grow up female, and an ugly if more complacent time to grow up male. To grow up a gay male was to fit yourself for the closet or a minute bar world. To grow up a lesbian: you didn't exist. Without the dimension of the possibility of loving each other, our friendships among women were doomed to be shelved at the first approach of a male. To say something nice about the fifties. Well, people read

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less poetry then, but they did read more fiction, and take fiction more seriously. It's hard sometimes to communicate about ideas in the limited vocabulary currently acceptable in conversation. People's unwillingness to look up words they don't know has reached mammoth proportions. Large amounts of time spent with people who don't know how to do much besides roll a joint does inspire me with nostalgic respect for the work ethic (real knowledge about how to do things, like fix machines that break, build walls that stay up, speak Spanish, put in a well, look up something in a library, design a computer language), but I think that knowledge of at least manual skills is beginning to spread. Further, people coming of age now *tend* to be less hierarchical in their ranking of blue-collar, white-collar, black-coat work.

But I can't summon up any honest nostalgia for the fifties. In the fifties when I got pregnant I couldn't get an abortion, had to do it myself at eighteen and almost bled to death. In the fifties I was at the mercy of a male culture terrified of sex and telling me I was either frigid, a nymphomaniac, an earth mother, or stunted with penis envy, and there were no women's experiences available to compare with mine. In the fifties nowhere could I find images of a life I considered good or useful or dignified. Nowhere could I find a way to apply myself to change the world to one I could live in with more joy and utility. Nowhere could I find a community to heal myself to in struggle. Nowhere could I find space in which affluent white men were not the arbiters of all that was good and bad. I could not grow anywhere but through the cracks. I was not *for* anyone, my work burped in a void. I learned survival but also alienation, hostility, craziness, schizophrenia. Not until the slow opening of the sixties was I able to think I might begin to cease to be a victim, an internal exile, a madwoman. I might become an adult. I might be useful, I might speak and be heard, listen and receive. I might be delivered finally to a sense of a past that led to me/us (Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mother Jones, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Luxembourg, Lucy Stone, Louise Michel). I might live in a community, however tacky and bleak at times, however scattered and faddish. I might conceive of my living and my working as a project forward in a struggle, however long and difficult and unlikely, tending toward a more humane society. Of course

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our recent past and present has also brought me beatings, gassings, danger, repression, fear, separation, demands, condemnation, physical collapse, overwork, exhaustion, petty bickerings, faction fights, fanaticism, hate mail, objectification, a more complicated life than I am at ease with, and a gallery of more judges than I need, presumably on my side but sometimes I despairingly wonder. I would not trade the worst of it for the isolation and dead-endedness of the fifties. To live in the fifties and think that the way this society distributes money, power, resources, prestige, and dirty work was wrong was to stand up in a stadium during a football game and attempt to read aloud a poem.

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STORIES

Don Zacharia

J

(THE NOTE)

Ten days after J died I opened HER drawer. It was filled with scraps of her life: old report cards, birth announcements, a clipping about the Swiacki catch that beat Army (she used to date him), matchbooks and ticket stubs and some foreign coins, a letter from Radcliffe's admissions office saying that she had been put on the waiting list (she never made it and never forgave them), three cigarettes, some letters I had written her, a picture of a young girl I didn't know, a picture of her mother that was cut down the middle, some poetry that she had written with her right hand, a dunning letter from Lord & Taylor, and the following note that she had written in longhand, undated and unsigned:

In this whole world I love and have
loved the following people in this order
in diminishing quantity:
my husband
my children (in almost equal amts.)
my mother
my brother
adlai stevenson
i can't think of anyone else.

(WAR STORIES)

With her head on my stomach, she is drawing circles around my belly button. I would like her to stop but say nothing. I gaze

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at the nape of her neck and run my fingers up and down that strange valley that is formed in certain women. Nothing is as it appears at first.

"The telephone is ringing," she says.

"I don't hear it."

"The telephone is ringing. Listen——there, it just rang."

I listen very intently. "I still don't hear it."

"I'm getting bored. Do you have any porny movies?"

"In my life there have been two women who have known me. One being my late past dead wife, and the other a girl from Baltimore who married a chiropractor. If they were in this room now they would both say in unison that nothing is as it appears at first."

I run my fingers through her thick red curly hair. I am always touching her hair; in restaurants, in theaters. Sometimes as we walk together I will reach out and with my fingers gather in its texture. I love doing it. Twice at nighttime she has let me fall asleep with my lips buried in her hair. I have been afraid to ask her to do it again. She, probably, knowing her, would make a whole thing out of it, and honestly, it's nothing, just a pleasant kind of feeling. I notice for the first time that it is darker at the roots and it occurs to me that even though I have fucked her four dozen or so times and sucked her off AT LEAST half of that again, for a million dollars I didn't know the color of her pubic hairs. Do I shut my eyes? Good God! I get out of bed, unnerved, and go into the bathroom and rinse my mouth out with a super size bottle of Scope.

"What are you doing," she asks.

"I'm rinsing my mouth out with Scope."

"Why?"

"Like that."

"Do you feel you did something dirty with it, Noel?"

I spit. "Jesus, really Jesus. Sometimes I've noticed, particularly after I've screwed you, you get very hostile toward me." I smile at myself in the mirror. "Every night," I go on, "for that last twenty years I have rinsed my mouth out. I don't think I have ever missed."

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She claps her hands silently for a long time. "That's healthy. You must have some fucking mouth."

I get back into bed and we kiss. "I love you, old man."

"Yeah, yeah."

"You have this red scar that runs from the left side of your belly button almost to the side of your groin. It's raised. I am conscious of it when I touch your stomach. Halfway down there is a much smaller scar that runs diagonally across it."

"I've told you about it before."

"Yes. I know. Tell me again. Change the story, Noel."

"I was in Korea——"

"When?"

"Let's see, spring of 1953."

"Holy cow, I was six years old."

That's the phrase she used——holy cow——I swear. "I was walking in the woods. I used to like to walk in the woods in Korea. Sometimes I would do it with other men, and sometimes I would do it by myself. This time I was by myself, and I was walking in the woods. It was nighttime and I bumped into this Chinese soldier. That was a very unusual thing to happen. Sometimes when I was walking in the woods someone would shoot at me and sometimes I would shoot at someone or something, but I never really bumped into anyone. He had on this funny hat and he looked——he looked very Chinese. I mean, he looked just the way you would think a Chinese guy would look; kinda short and dumpy and those funny eyes. We stood there looking at each other for a long time. I smiled at him and he smiled back. I sat down and he sat down. I offered him a cigarette and he took it and we both smoked. We just sat there for a while listening to the one-five-fives sounding off in the night, not saying anything to each other. I picked up a stick and threw it and he picked up a stick and threw it. He liked that a lot. He put his hands on his head and started to laugh. 'Do-you-want-to-surrender-to-me,' I asked him. 'If-you-surrender-to-me-I-will-personally-see-to-it-that—you-get-excellent-treatment. I-will-personally-see-to-it.' He nodded his head, yes, really violently. He kept nodding it up and down, up and down. 'O.K.-O.K.' I said, 'You-are-my-prisoner.' We both

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stood up, I started to tell him about the Geneva Convention when he stabbed me in the stomach."

"Is that it?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Noel, I like that a lot better than the last one. Listen," she says, "listen!"

I sat up. "I don't hear anything."

"Listen."

"I still don't hear anything." I was getting alarmed.

"The phone is ringing. Constantly."

"You're hallucinating. You're smoking so much of that Jamaican ganchi you've become permanently spaced out." I pick up the phone. "There's no one here. Hello," I talk into the mouthpiece, "hello, hello, hello, hello——"

"Hello, Noel, how are you?"

It was my mother calling from Florida. How are you——I'm all right——You never call us——I'll call you tomorrow——How are the children——They're O.K.——What's the matter? You seem so distant on the phone——I was sleeping——Don't you feel well——Yes, yes, I feel well——Have you heard from the children——They're O.K.——Have they written you——Yes, I got two letters from them yesterday——Why don't they write me——I don't know, you know children. I'll tell them to write you——What are you doing now——I was rinsing out my mouth and getting ready to go to sleep——You told me you were sleeping. Are you sure everything is all right——Would you hold on one sec, Mother, I have to close the window——

I muffle the phone under the covers. My red-haired friend had gone down on me the minute the phone rang. She had a thing about that and had done it before. But this time when she heard it was my mother she had got to work in earnest and was now doing something with her teeth on the side of my prick that is not such an easy thing to describe.

"Look," I say, "it's my mother."

She stops for a moment. "Do me a favor, Noel. It's very meaningful to me. If you do me this favor someday I'll do you a favor. I want you to come in my mouth while you are talking to your mother."

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I pick the phone back up. "Mother, I have to get off. I smell gas."

"Gas!"

"Yes. I'll call you tomorrow." I say good night and hang up. We both go to sleep. In the middle of the night she wakes me up.

"There's something else I want to tell you about yourself, Noel. After we fuck, you always kind of slink off into the bathroom and wash your gen-i-ta-ls." She pronounces it like it is a seven-syllable word. "That really makes a woman feel good."

(WHO——WHO——WHO)

I have three children: Susan, twelve; Peter, ten; and Loie, four. J, their mother, died of lung cancer a few months ago. She smoked an awful lot.

It is early fall. We have decided to go to the cemetery for the first time since J's funeral. The girls are cutting roses. It was Susan's idea. There is much discussion between the two of them about which to cut and which to leave. Pete is sitting on the front steps fooling around with some baseball cards. I sit down next to him. Some time passes. Loie sticks herself on a rose stem and starts to cry. The two of them sit down on a rock and Susan sucks on her finger until she stops crying. I ask Pete if he would like to bring something up to the cemetery also. It is an awkward question and I stumble over it. Some red licorice, he asks? Sure, why not. The girls collect their flowers and we all get into the car. Ahh——how delightful the roses smell.

Driving to the cemetery we talk some but mostly sing songs. I sing from my childhood some lefty songs that I remember: "Tell me, comrade, do you read——The Daily Worker, yes, indeed." We all sing with Loie "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Three Blind Mice," and then Susan and Pete do a whole thing with camp songs about Vietnam and black people and loves that never were. They skip over some dirty words with knowing glances at each other.

J is buried halfway up a long hill with a lone tree at the head of her grave. It isn't a particularly strong tree and we all hope it lives through the winter. It's not bad up there. It is a clear day and

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in the distance we see some boys playing football in a field. A single engine plane passes overhead. Some squirrels dart about. The girls spread their roses up and down the grave and Pete throws the licorice about, giving Loie the last piece.

"Some grave," I say.

"Which way is her head?" Pete asks.

"Facing up."

"No. I mean, which end is it at?"

"I don't know. I would guess at the high side. Why?"

"Because if it is there, Loie is standing on her head. Loie, you're standing on Mommy's head."

Loie looks up, startled, and moves to one side.

"Let's go exploring," Pete says to Loie.

We watch them skip down the hill. Loie is ahead and Pete ducks behind one of those massive tombstones. In a moment, Loie turns. There are some people watching. "Peter," Loie says, "I know you're someplace." He looks back at us and holds a finger to his lips. Loie starts back up the hill. "Come out, come out, wherever you are . . . Come out, come out, wherever you are," she sings out.

Peter leaps from behind the tombstone, arms outstretched, lips puckered, eyes turned back, and in his lowest, scariest voice, "I am a vampire looking for blood . . ." They both break up into giggles and hand in hand start down the hill again.

I sit down on the grass and turn my face to the sun, enjoying its warmth. "I did something rather childish," my twelve-year-old daughter tells me. "I wrote Mother a letter this morning. I would like to bury it here——maybe up there where there's some loose dirt." She points to a spot below the tree above the grave. Squinting, I nod all right.

"Hey," Peter shouts up the hill; he and Loie are studying a tombstone, "there's someone who's three hundred and twenty years old."

Susan digs a hole out using her hands. Reaching into her pants pocket, she pulls out a folded note, places it into the hole, covers it back with some dirt, smoothes it out and throws some rocks over it.

On the way back home, Peter tells Loie a story about a little

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girl locked in a cemetery at nighttime and how all the people who are buried there come out of their graves and go who——who——who.

(S & M IS MY FAVORITE THING)

While she is fiddling with the air conditioner I slip off the bed and on my hands and knees easily begin biting her ass. She likes it at first. I can tell the way she moves, but then when I try to get in there with my tongue she turns around and spreads her legs and asks me to eat her there——not too much and gently, you cunt-sucker, and stop when I say stop because I don't want to make a whole number out of it, okay? I do, of course, but it is not what I want. Later, in bed: "You, uh, have some anal hangups?"

"I'm not crazy about it."

"But you've done it before?"

"Once or twice or three times with men like you."

"What does that mean?"

Shaking her head the way she does so that her red hair tumbles over most of her face, "I think you think of your wife when you fuck me."

"You've mentioned that before."

"Do you think of her alive or dead?"

"I think of her alive."

"Nice. When, exactly, do you think of her?"

I get up and bring a beer back to bed that we both share. "I'm not sure I understand what you mean."

"Shit, Noel, there must be a specific time when you are fucking me when you first think of her."

I wonder where this is going. "Just before I come," I finally say, wiping some beer from my lips.

"I could have guessed. I knew that. Without you telling me, I knew it. Is it visual?"

"Yes, very much so."

"Can you put it into words?"

"I'm not sure. I'll try. Sometimes certain visions are sort of nonverbal. It's as if a picture of J's face invades me. It's not a

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flashing kind of thing, like showing pictures on a wall with a slide projector. Do you remember that scene in *Carnal Knowledge* where Jack Nicholson flashes the slides of all the women he has known? Well, it's not that kind of thing at all."

"Do you visualize her face? The way she looked at any particular time?"

"No, it's not like that at all. It's her . . . I guess the only word I can think of is her presence."

"Is that why it takes you so long to come, because you are having nonverbal visual thoughts of J's presence at that time?"

"No. I've always been that way."

"Oh, groovy, baby."

"I can come whenever I want. I can come whenever I want. I can come whenever I want. I can come whenever I want. I can come whenever I want. I can come——"

"Bullshit, lover. I'll make you come whenever I want," she says, swishing some beer through her teeth.

"Wanna bet a yard?"

"I ain't got a yard. My unemployment check is four-zero a week and every now and then I snatch twenty from you. You put up your little yard and if I can't make you come in a five-minute period, I'll be your slave for the rest of the night."

"Crazy." I am nonplused. "Super crazy. Get me another beer."

"You can whip me, lover."

There is a tightening in my stomach, a tickling in my groin, a dry spot in my throat. A vague kind of feeling comes over me that if I stood up I would like to be very close to a wall, a piece of furniture, something solid and substantial that I could touch with my hands and perhaps even lean against with my body. I cross my legs, trying to hide my excitement. "How did you come up with that?"

"You've made enough hints about that scene: all those playful slaps on my ass that weren't so playful; all those jokes about turning me over your knee and spanking me that weren't jokes. If I lose, if I can't make you come in a five-minute period, you can tie me up if you want. Tie each one of my hands to one of the bedposts and each leg to the bed frame, spread-eagled with some

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pillows under my stomach elevating my behind. I think it would be best if you did tie me up. It's a must. That way, no matter what you want to do I can't resist. Use my panties as a gag, stuffing them into my mouth, not too tight so that you can't hear me moan, but tight so that my mouth is filled with it. And then whip me, twenty-five times with that thin leather belt you have, or you can spank me with your hands if you prefer, or do both. Don't stop, no matter what I say or do, don't stop. After you've finished with me, you can do whatever you want to me, or you can make me do whatever you want to you. Anything, lover. You can lick my asshole. You can make me crawl across the room on my hands and knees with my arms tied behind me just to suck you, and if I don't suck you exactly the way you want me to suck you, you can whip me some more until I learn how to do it exactly the way you want it done."

She lies down on her side, facing me. I wonder if she realizes how very excited I am; how very conscious I am of the way air seems to be touching my body. My fingers tingle, or perhaps I imagine that. She continues to lie next to me, doing nothing. "When do we start?" I say.

"We've started," she says. "Two minutes down and three minutes to go and the game is over. I want to lose, lover. I don't want to make you come. I want you to whip me; to do those things to me. Instead of gagging me with my panties, just put them over my face, like a blindfold, with the crotch part around my mouth. That would be so humiliating for me. When you whip me, talk to me. Ask me questions. Ask me if I like what is happening to me. Make me lick my panties. Make me count each stroke. If I don't do what you want, if I don't please you, whip me harder. Make me beg for each stroke. Make me ask for it. Tell me some of the things you are going to do to me when you finish whipping me. Make me call you master. Tell me exactly where you are going to whip me next; that if I don't do just as you say, that if I don't say just what you command me to say, you will whip my cunt. When you whip me, lover, do it hard. Don't baby me. That would spoil it. Do some on my ass and some on my thighs. I want tomorrow and the day after tomorrow to know that I was whipped by you. I want to feel it when I sit down. I want to look

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in the mirror when I go home and run my hands along the welts that you are going to make. No matter what, no matter how I moan or beg you to stop, you must finish. If you don't, it becomes a bummer. Here, feel this." She rubs her hand over her cunt and presses it to my mouth. "I'm sopping, aren't I? I've never been so wet down there. I'm like a pool just from talking about it. If you do it right, lover, if you do it slowly, if you get into the right mood, I'll come while you are whipping me. NOEL," she sits up, "WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING TO YOU?"

I had started to come. Without a hand being laid on me I was shooting all over the place: the bed, the phone, the ceiling, me, just like that. She goes into the bathroom and comes out with a towel. Smiling, she backhands the towel to me.

(J DYING)

CANCER: 1. The crab genus. Ah, J. I insisted against everyone's wishes that they open the coffin. Hands crossed, eyes tightly shut, whiter than white, how very still she was. "Mr. Roth," J's doctor is talking to me. He is a nice man I suppose, competent in his field. Short and stocky, with, yes, a crew cut, but he confided to me once that he liked Dylan, or was it Dylan Thomas? "It's only a matter of days," he tells me. His walls are crowded with degrees and a painting of three yellow flowers. "A week, perhaps two, it's difficult to project." An image of Loie, my youngest daughter, sipping morning tea is flashed on the wall next to the flowers. It is there for a blink. She is making a funny face, her eyes wide and mouth twisted. Ughy tea. Bittersweet stuff. "Try to keep her out of the hospital as long as you can," J's doctor whispers. Walter Rudd. It is very confusing because in looking back and looking forward I cannot separate reality from some dreams I am having. Not being able to separate dreams from reality is intimidating; suggestive of mental problems that I care not to handle or even think about. I know those policemen came over to my house though. I still have that lieutenant's card in my drawer, and the other day I looked at it. His name is Walter Rudd. Lieutenant Walter Rudd. "I will," I respond, "keep her out of the hospital as long as I can."

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Driving to the funeral in back of the limo I sing, my mother gave me a nickel/ to buy a pickle/ I didn't buy a pickle/ I bought some chewing gum/ chew, chew, chew, chew, chewing gum/ how I love chewing gum/ I'm crazy over chewing gum/ I chew, chew, chew, chew.

"Do you remember the time, Noel," J is talking to me from the shade, "when I had to go into that country store in Chenas—— I think it was Chenas, oh shit, maybe it was Macon, and ask for a suppository for you? *Monsieur, j'ai besoin d'une suppositoire.* How do you say," leafing through her French phrases, "hemorrhoids, *mon amour.*" I insisted against everyone's wishes that they open the coffin. Hands crossed, eyes tightly shut, whiter than white, how very still she was.

In the morning, I bring J downstairs. She has lost the vision in her left eye and has also lost her sense of balance. She walks taking tiny steps. I lose my patience. One hand around my waist, the other hand sliding on the wall, "Am I falling, Noel? It feels very much like I'm falling. Let's stop for a moment." She shuts her eyes and rests her face against the wall. "If I could just stay this way. I feel better now." Mitosis is the indirect and more common method of cell division, in which the nuclear chromatin is formed into a long thread which in turn breaks into segments that are split lengthwise, the halves coming together in two sets, each forming the nucleus for a new cell.

ISN'T THAT INTERESTING YOU GODDAM FUCK?

2. A northern constellation between Gemini and Leo, supposedly representing a CRAB in shape. "Hey," Loie says, "Mommy's sleeping in the morning."

Her eyes half shut showing white, her hands twitch, her body jerks involuntarily, but I am used to that by now. There are some saliva drippings on her lip that I wipe off with a napkin. "Yeah. She's pooped. Go play. Later we'll go into town together."

"Will you pull me on my wagon?"

"Ugh. Halfway there and halfway back. Okay?"

She nods yes and grabbing a lump of sugar goes off to dig holes in the sand, and later tries to catch minnows with her minnow catching net while she is floating in the tube that has the face of an alligator painted on the front of it. Some people pass by

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with pails filled with crabs. They wave to me, and Loie looks at their crabs, keeping her distance the whole time. I am lost in Queens.

I have nothing to do while I am waiting for J's doctor, so I think about children pulling grass out of the ground. "There has been spread." He doesn't look at me, and I don't look at him. There is no need for that now. Neither of us have to be men. "We don't know much about it, only that it happens. We don't know why, and we have no idea how to stop it. The particular process that is involved is called metastasis. In J's case, there is now a large tumor located in her cerebellum. Keep her out of the sun. Keep her in the shade."

3. In astronomy, the fourth sign of the Zodiac, entered by the sun about June twenty-second. J smiles and claps her hands repeatedly, fifteen, twenty, thirty times. She straightens her head scarf, pulling it down even further over her forehead. There is something strange about the way it looks. Something doesn't quite register about the way it sits on her head. What could it be? Of course. How could I forget? She's bald.

"I caught two minnows," Loie shouts excitedly, holding up her net. "They're squiggly and I'm gonna let 'em go." Cancer is a disorderly, purposeless growth of cells. Living things grow by an orderly process of cell division called mitosis. In mitosis one cell divides into two, two into four, four cells become eight, and so on. NOW LISTEN. Normally mitosis is controlled naturally so that the body produces only the kinds and amounts of cells needed. When anything interferes with this control, the cells grow without stopping and build up masses of tissues without stopping. OH, WOW! AH, YES. Malignant tumors are not self-contained. ARE YOU LISTENING? I SAID MALIGNANT TUMORS ARE NOT SELF-CONTAINED. They invade the tissues near them by a little understood process called metastasis. Cancer may set up new growths in parts of the body far removed from the site of the original tumor. Loie blows bubbles in the water.

"I remember that," I say to the cop.

"Gowanus to Utopia to Tinker," he says.

"Ah, yes."

DANGER——Cobalt is being given. Do not proceed beyond

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black line unless green light is flashing. A little cobalt here, a little cobalt there——eh——it's like nothing at all. You lay on a table and this machine goes pzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. J woke up one night after her ninth treatment out of a series of twenty, and in a period of ten minutes pulled out all of her hair and piled it on the sheet in front of her. It came out easily, aimlessly, softly, wherever she touched, like a November leaf, without pressure or pain. I scooped it up and flushed it down the toilet. So it goes.

I am lost in Queens. Nuts. I stop and ask a lady where Tinker Street is, but she doesn't even look at me. It begins to pour and the Met game is called.

"I remember that," I say to the cop.

"Gowanus to Utopia to Tinker," he says.

"Ah, yes."

It's still raining like hell when my two children step off the camp bus. I hardly recognize them. My twelve-year-old daughter with her guitar slung over her back and my ten-year-old son with a sweatband around his head look like two hitchhikers I didn't pick up on the way in. We dash for the car soaked through.

"How come Mother didn't come?" Susan asks.

"She's not feeling well."

"The same thing she had before?"

"I thought she was going to get better. You wrote me once that she was feeling better," Pete says. He is belligerent.

"Well, some days she's better and some days she isn't."

"Susan kissed a boy."

"Oh, shut up."

"I saw her do it. Before we got on the bus at camp."

"Shut up, freak."

"He had pimples all over his face. His nose was one huge creepy pimple."

She hit him, and he hit her, and they both started to cry. I pulled the car over to the side of the road and made Pete sit in the front and Susan in the back. "Nice," I said. "Nice."

"Will Mommy be at the ferry?" Pete asks after a time.

We had to sit in the hold of the ferry going over to Fire Island. It was still raining pretty hard and it wasn't so pleasant down there. "Your mother is pretty sick," I say to the two of them.

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"Worse than the spring?" Susan asks.

"Yes."

"Will she be all right? Will she live?" Pete asks.

I look at him, caught off guard. "What do you mean? Yes. She'll be all right. Most of her trouble has to do with balance. It is very hard for her to walk about without being helped."

"For breakfast," Pete says, "can we have bacon? We didn't have bacon once all summer."

4. In medicine, a malignant new growth in the body of a person or animal; a malignant tumor. Cancers tend to spread and ulcerate. Oh, brother. "It is good that she saw the children." Someone, I don't know who, but someone said that to me. What that person meant, it's right on the tip of my tongue, who the hell was it, what that person meant was that J died the next day and it was good because the day before she died the two older children came home from camp and they saw J and J saw them. I think that's what she meant. Who knows? Maybe she meant something else. It felt like it always felt, pleasant, soft, casual. "I'm sorry," J's doctor is talking to me. I had brought her into the hospital that morning semiconscious. "It's a matter of time. We will try to keep her comfortable."

"How much time?"

"Not very much time."

I went for a walk and had a sandwich and when I came back to J's room two nurses were rummaging through J's pocketbook. "What are you doing?"

They looked startled. The shorter one spoke: "We have to make an inventory of your wife's possessions——"

"Please——" I looked at J; her mouth propped open by some kind of surgical instrument, eyes closed, face twisted in the agony of dying. Her hands had been folded in front of her with her fists still clenched. Nude from the waist up, her breasts seemed very alive to me. I looked away, never wanting to remember that scene that I could never forget. What do I do now? Do I leave the room? Do I call a rabbi? Do I call *The New York Times*? I sat down on the side of her bed. I touched one of her breasts, fondling it for a frozen moment. It felt like it had always felt; pleasant, soft, casual.

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(UN––DEUX––TROIS)

"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call Mittman, Mittman, Mittman, Mittman & Sons and order a new mattress, a new box frame, a new headboard, and a new inner soul."

"I wish you would. I'm getting all hung up on this bed; really hung all the fucking way. All I ever think about when we fuck these days is your dead wife. Jesus, you have completely fucked me up. Which side did she sleep on?"

I reach for her but she moves away. "When I get the new mattress, your vista will change."

"Fuck." She sits up and stretches and wipes herself with the sheet. "You come very heavy. Sometimes you are still oozing out of me two hours later."

"When I first saw you at the ferry––"

"Yes?"

"While the ferry was docking I got a hard on. J was dead twenty-four hours and if you would have let me I would have fucked you in ten minutes."

"Would you be interested in a menage?"

I sat up. My neck cracked. "Where?"

"Here." Smacking the bed with her fist. "Right on this goddam bed."

"No, no, I'll get a room at the Pierre."

"Forget it."

"All right, here."

"It can be a groovy thing. I've had a couple of exceptional experiences that way. Sometimes you can be a little uptight the first time, but the second and third time can be exceptional. Dynamite, I get hot just thinking about it. Two people work on one, and you keep taking turns. The idea of you fucking me and someone licking my cunt and ass and your cock and balls while you're fucking me and then eating my cunt after you've come––dynamite, that grabs me." She reaches for the vibrating dildo that we had been fooling around with and, placing it on a pillow, lowers herself down and sits herself on top of it. "Don't talk to me, Noel. Go away." Supporting herself with her hands, legs spread, in a half-kneeling position, she begins to rock back and

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forth letting the dildo touch her as she chooses. "Please, please leave the room, Noel. Do me a favor and get the hell out of here. Go away. Get the fuck out of here."

I go downstairs and pour myself a scotch. The phone rings. It is my younger sister. "Can you hold the line for a sec?" I go into the kitchen and put more ice in the glass, go back to the den, put an old Beatle record on, wait for it to drop, lower the volume in the left speaker, take a deep swallow of scotch and pick the phone back up. "Hi."

"Is someone there?"

"No."

"How's the family?"

"You must be kidding."

"Are you all right?"

I love that question. Of all the questions in the world I love that one best. "Yes, I'm O.K."

"Are you going out?"

"I went to a Met game."

"Don't be a smart ass. You know what I mean."

My den is right below my bedroom. I hear a thump and look up at the ceiling.

"Hello, hello, are you there, Noel?"

"Yes, I'm here."

"Are you alone?"

"For the second time, yes, I'm very alone."

"When is camp visiting day?"

"Next week."

"It's been almost a year, Noel."

"Yes, I know."

"Look, what I'm going to say now you're going to get angry at, but just for once I want you to listen without flying off the handle."

"I'm very calm."

"My temple has a singles group for you know, divorcees and widowers. They meet once a month at someone's home, usually one of the women. It's very relaxed, very casual, no pressure. You just sit around and have drinks and they send out for Chinese or Italian food. They asked me if you would be interested?"

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"No."

"I knew that would be your answer."

"Have I flown off the handle? I'm very calm. I just said no."

"Why? Try it. It's been a year."

"No."

"Why?"

"I don't think I'm emotionally ready to go out with a woman yet. It wouldn't be fair to the woman involved. I'm still too involved with my feelings toward J to start getting involved with dating." That stopped her cold. If I didn't know better, I would think the line was cut. Finally, she said she was sorry. "Don't be silly. It was kind of you to think of me."

"What——what about sex?"

"What?" I want her to repeat it. "We have this lousy connection."

"You heard me."

"Look," I say looking up at the ceiling, "if God forbid Al died (her husband), would I call you ten months after and ask you what about sex?"

"Oh, Jesus, Noel, you have a way of making me feel like shit."

"I'm sorry, really. I have to go now. I think I smell gas."

"Gas?"

"Gas."

I go upstairs to my bedroom and knock. There is no answer. I open the door. She is sleeping quietly; her buttocks pushed up by the pillow, hands crossed beneath her, breasts flattened by her position, eyes tightly shut, her skin strangely white, how still she seems. The dildo had fallen off the bed and lies on the floor. I sit down next to her, easily, not wanting to wake her. The pillow that she is lying on is soiled with the stuff from her cunt. I touch it with my fingers, sticky, clinging, wet, and bring my fingers to my lips.

(SHITTIN' SHIVA)

Shittin' shiva is a shit, man. As a matter of fact, as I'm writin' this I'm takin' a shit so maybe that's why I'm thinkin' what I'm

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thinkin'. Maybe if I wasn't takin' a shit just now, maybe if I was lyin' on a beach somewheres in P.R., I would be relatin' to what happened completely differently, but what the shit——

The deli man said in his day he had seen some orders, but this was the number two of all time, topped only when H.D. the movie mogul died, and how can you compare H.D. the movie mogul to my dead wife, J? (Hands crossed, eyes tightly shut, whiter than white, I saw her against everyone's wishes. I insisted they open the coffin and I looked. How still she was.)

We ordered. My friends did the ordering; I wasn't doing anything but trying to understand how my wife could die and the whole world be alive. We ordered fifty pounds nova, twenty pounds sturgeon, four turkeys, four roast beefs, one hundred rye breads, eighty dozen mixed bagels, some with seeds and some without, and meat loaf with garlic. It was all laid out on the dining room table and when we got back from the funeral everyone was eating sandwiches and lox and bagels and drinking. Some local police were directing traffic. Everyone was there. I walked in with my son Pete, who looked around and said he was going to his room. I went up after him knocked and entered. He was watching TV, an old "Star Trek."

"I've seen this one six times."

"You must know the ending."

"Yes. I've never seen so many people in the house."

"It's a custom. An old one."

He flicked the TV stations around and settled back with "Star Trek." "Do you want to sit up here with me and watch?"

"No. I have to go downstairs. Can I bring you a sandwich?"

"There's nothing there I like."

"God."

Downstairs my home was filled to capacity with people eating and drinking and laughing and talking. Everyone was very solicitous of me. As I moved from room to room people would press back clearing a path for me. I felt like the Pope. There were an awful lot of people there whose faces looked familiar, but whose names I didn't know. Every room was packed. I wondered

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why they came? Someone asked me if I had eaten, and I said no, and they said I should because now you have to fill two roles. I moved on, confused by that. People smiled at me, saying things with their eyes that I couldn't understand. I was confused by that also. Lots of people asked me if they could get me a sandwich.

"Do you want a chicken liver and onion, Noel?"

"No thank you."

"It's important you should eat."

I moved on.

"Can I fix you something?" A friend asked.

"Keep your health up," someone else said whose name I didn't know. "There's only you. You have to be a mother and a father now."

I saw the rabbi and went over to him. He was an all right guy. He went up to the pulpit that morning, and didn't say any of that shit that rabbis say about people coming and people going and the tides come and the tides go but the oceans remain and all that supershit stuff. He looked out over the hundreds of people there and in a voice so quiet that someone in the back actually said louder, (if I had a gun I would have shot the cocksucker) and said after a time that he had known J and was sorry that she had died, and he personally was going to miss her. He looked around some more, as if he was almost looking for someone or something, and repeated what he had said, that he was going to miss her for a long time to come, and with that walked off the pulpit. There was a lot of murmuring. I suppose a lot of people felt upset by his lack of form, or the fact that he showed real emotion, but I think he is a very all right human being.

"How long does this last?" I asked him.

"Seven days."

"God." I moved on.

"Did you eat something?" someone asked me.

"Fuck off." I went into the kitchen. It was a beehive of activity.

"We're out of CCL," someone shouted.

"Above the phone, two down from the vet's number and one

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up from frig repairs is the deli. Call him and ask him to deliver——oh God——how much——at least——oh God——at least one hundred pounds CCL and more rye bread."

"If he doesn't use it," someone else said, "he can always freeze it."

"Hi yuh, Noel. How yuh doin'?"

"What's CCL?"

"I think, Noel, people should start leaving so the people who are waiting outside could start coming in. I think there should be a time limit on how long certain people should stay. I think that people who really knew you and J should be allowed to stay, but the others should only stay for five minutes so the other people could come in."

"There is no flow," a tall rangy girl whom I had never seen in my life said.

"What's CCL?" They looked at me unfamiliarly. Could it be that I was in the wrong house? "What's CCL?"

"Chopped chicken liver."

"Oh."

In the dining room a great many people were paying attention to Loie. She seemed to be having a fine time. Someone was doing a magic trick for her.

"Noel, did you eat something?"

"Yes. I just had a sturgeon and lox and CCL triple decker with onion and lettuce and a glass of milk."

"Do you want something else?"

"No thank you."

"Now which hand is the nickel in Loie?"

She seemed puzzled. It was a pretty sophisticated trick to be showing a three-year-old. "Hi," she said to me.

"Hi."

"Mommy's dead."

Someone shut the radio off. The toilet flushed. The dog barked and wouldn't stop. "Yes," I said, "Mommy's dead."

"Which hand is the nickel in, Loie?"

"Neither," she said.

I went outside and spoke to Susan who was swinging on the swing.

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"Who pays for all the food?" she asked me.

"I do."

It went on that way, all day and all night. Everyone showed. It was even more hectic and crowded in the evening. "Why do we do this?" I asked the rabbi.

He shrugged and mumbled something about Moses. "It's a custom that has gotten out of hand."

"I can't stand it any more."

He shrugged again and motioned me closer. "You have a burglar–fire alarm system that goes clang clang?"

I nodded yes, but he had already turned and was talking to someone about the one time in his life that Moses found it necessary to use physical force.

It was a disaster. Everyone panicked except my son. He knew exactly what to do, because we had rehearsed it many times. Soon as the alarm went off, cool as a cucumber, he opened his window, climbed out on the garage roof, gracefully leaped to the tree growing nicely alongside the garage and shimmied to the ground. Standing there with gleaming eyes and a slightly bloodied knee, he kept urging people not to panic and to move away from the house in case there was an explosion. When everyone was out of the house, I locked the doors, shut the alarm off, poured myself a scotch and waited for the police. I let them in when they came, relocked the door and invited them into the den: one lieutenant, two sergeants, and six patrolmen.

"Mr. Roth," the lieutenant handed me his card and was the obvious spokesman, "I am Lieutenant Walter Rudd. Your alarm system went off." He pulled a small notebook and pencil out and waited. Everyone else seemed terribly bewildered.

"Would you gentlemen like something to eat? A sturgeon sandwich, turkey, CCL, anything?"

"Mr. Roth, the alarm system went off. There are five hundred people on your front lawn—"

"How about some beers?" I stood up.

"No thank you," the spokesman said. "I don't mean to belabor a point," he tapped his notebook with his pencil, "but a series of events seems to be taking place here that we have to get to the bottom of. When your alarm system went off in headquarters,

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four, I repeat, four police cars interrupted their normal tours and came here at speed red."

"Speed red?"

"That's a police term: speed red, speed blue, speed pink; it describes the approximate speed the police vehicle should use in getting to the destination." He paused here as if in great thought over what he just said. "Speed red is a fast speed, endangering the lives of the officers who are driving the vehicles and endangering the lives of pedestrian women and children who might dart in the way of a police vehicle getting to their destination."

There was some shuffling about and some of the other officers nodded their heads. There was one who was kind of grinning though. "I set the alarm off Lieutenant, because I wanted to get all those people out of my house. I'm sorry. I didn't quite think you would all come——" I swept my hand around the room.

"Mr. Roth," the spokesman said in a pretty sharp voice really hitting his notebook with his pencil, "if I put that in this notebook it would set off a series of events that might lead to your indictment."

"God." I was immediately sorry for my choice of a word. "What I meant to say Lieutenant, was that I thought I smelt gas, and because I feared an explosion with all those people in the house I turned the alarm system on."

"Oh." He motioned to two of his men and they disappeared toward the basement. The spokesman kept writing in his notepad for what seemed to be an awfully long time, although he never did turn the page. I was watching him pretty closely. When they finally left, satisfied with my story, I insisted that they all go with bags filled with rye breads, cold cuts, and everything until the kitchen was bare of food. I let them out, I think even more bewildered than when they came in. Loaded down in both hands with tons of groceries, it would have been a hell of a note if they had to draw their guns. Most of the people had gone home, but there were still some milling about my front lawn killing the grass. I smiled at them and motioned to my sister to come in.

"Noel, what the fuck is going on?" It was not a word she used lightly. "What were those policemen carrying?"

"I'm taking the children to Fire Island tomorrow morning."

"There will be people coming here——"

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I leaned over and kissed her forehead. "I can't handle this. It is not what I am. It is not what J was. Make up a story. Tell them I had a nervous collapse due to the whatever. Tell them to go to the Roxy instead."

The next morning as the ferry slipped into its slip, I saw her for the first time. Standing so casually, waiting for someone, I wished for the moment it was me. Every turn of her head, every gust of wind caused her bright red hair to become even more disarrayed than what it was. I tried to catch her eye, but no luck. What a beauty. She was wearing an old-fashioned man's tee shirt, cut out at the armpits with thin shoulder straps. Watching her breasts slip about, more exposed than not, I had the feeling that at any moment she was going to take her tee shirt off and start casually fondling her nipples. She was causing quite a commotion on the ferry. "Welcome to Fire Island," someone in back of me said.

We were the last people off the ferry, and I walked over to her. She was still intently peering at the empty ferry, and I had the feeling that in her short lifetime, she looked like she was born after World War Two, a thousand men had walked over to her like I had, groping for that one really smart line that would let her immediately know that they were not of the usual but a deep sensitive human. "Hi," I said. She didn't even turn her head to see who spoke. I thought it might be a practiced response. "There is no one left on the ferry. We are the last people off, so if you are waiting for someone they are not on this ferry."

"Dynamite."

"My mommy died the day before yesterday," Loie said.

"Jesus, Loie," Pete said smacking her in the neck, "you don't have to tell the world."

Loie looked hurt. "Let's go," I said. We started to walk and she caught up with us at the grocery store.

"Hey, kid," she spoke to Loie, "you wanna ride in my wagon?"

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NOBODY DIES IN THE SPRING

Nobody dies in the spring
on the Upper West Side:
nobody dies.
On the Upper West Side
we're holding hands with strangers
on the Number 5 bus,
and we're singing the sweet
graffiti on the subway,
and kids are skipping patterns through
the bright haze of incinerators,
and beagles and poodles are making a happy
ruin of the sidewalks,
and hot-dog men are racing
their pushcarts down Riverside Drive,
and Con Ed is tearing up Broadway
from Times Square to the Bronx,
and the world is a morning miracle
of sirens and horns and jackhammers
and Baskin-Robbins' 31 kinds of litter
and sausages at Zabar's floating
overhead like blimps——oh,
it is no place for dying, not
on the Upper West Side, in springtime.

There will be a time
for the smell of burning leaves at Barnard,
for milkweed winging silky over Grant's Tomb,
for apples falling to grass in Needle Park;
but not in all this fresh new golden
smog: now there is something
breaking loose in people's chests,
something that makes butchers and bus boys
and our neighborhood narcs and muggers
go whistling in the streets——now

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there is something with goat feet out there, not
waiting for the WALK light, piping
life into West End window-boxes,
pollinating weeds around
condemned residential hotels,
and prancing along at the head
of every elbowing crowd on the West Side,
singing:
Follow me——it's spring——
and nobody dies.

Philip Appleman

THE DEATH OF THE HUMAN PARTICLE

I was just sitting here at my desk quietly reading and, I thought, minding my own business, when I came upon an article containing the fact that the cells in my body are dying by the millions every few minutes——3,128,422 every three minutes was the exact figure. Also, the piece said that even should we just ever so slightly touch something, the poor things become bruised by the billions. Of course, it also explained, the body keeps replacing the extinguished cells, or otherwise each individual, such as the reader, would instantly begin to dwindle away and disappear. That was certainly a comforting thought, I thought, but still, it was somewhat disconcerting to learn that even when I wave hello to my loved one as she approaches, by inviting her to wave back, I cause her to kill a million of her particles by accelerating the pressures of the air; should I greet her with a big kiss and a hug, I murder an entire generation; and should it fall out that we fuck, we practically commit utter cellular genocide. What kind of humanists are we anyway, we human beings whose existence keeps on producing such tragedy with even the most sympathetic of our gestures? And what kind of moralists are we, too? How can we go on after finding out a thing like this about ourselves, except by telling ourselves that we needn't worry, that since the body contains such a great number of individuals, this decreases the importance of

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each one; or worse, perhaps we will justify our future slaughter by saying that it doesn't matter in the least how many cells we kill, since in a healthy person each dead individual cell is instantly replaced, and therefore no individual cell has any importance whatsoever. No, no, every man of true feeling knows that human life is an absolute; every man of true feeling knows also that whenever a single cell dies, it is appropriate that all mankind cries; that to be decent the mourning ought to be general and universal, and the funeral home crowded to capacity; that the line of honorary pallbearers should stretch as far as the furthermost horizon, while entire peoples get drunk at the wake; and as if by some earnest song or poem on one of the many serious subjects relating to the welfare of all mankind, the whole world be deeply touched.

Michael Benedikt

MICK JAGGER AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

All of a sudden down there
they're streaming like protoplasm
so eager to go
telling time like lives to work out

only wait

something for all forty thousand of us
or more

he comes on at midnight.
All right. What a piece
of come-on, so tough
what a mouth, you get it all right.

Moving takes him, he's here, he's
here, he's
no one's bad boy, he's trouble

in his fag leotard, red scarf, flashing
stud belt Mick makes

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wicked music, down there
they're dancing to it. In the balcony
men and their women are with him, trying
some light up and suck, the crazy air
hisses. He might for kicks take you, also
what you like, don't ask him to love it
or not laugh, he's AC/DC
as to God and politics, even sex
is easier than this
extreme case: he isn't nice
or not nice or not funny:
no satisfaction, satisfaction——
more than you want to know and live happy.

Helen Chasin

DAY OF THE EXTERMINATOR'S VISIT: Thinking About the Bauhaus (For Diana)

I want to paint everything white
for a Bauhaus world
that starts tomorrow——
the deadline
can never be met. Instead, real living
room for faded rug and pregnant cat,
one on top of the other.

But I would pretend
to start all over,
this time with plants
which would not wither
though often I'd forget to water them,
pick off their dead and
dust their leaves;

Cars idling down Beacon Street
would bisect the perpendicular of the window
on the left side
moving toward the center;

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and the street
would be intersected by two metal bars
dividing the window pane;
the cars idling down Beacon
would pass the intersection
of metal bars;
It would be morning;

Noises from relationships
(personal and spatial);
Angle of light
through west window
kitchen smells
and my sleep (artistic, inverted)
curves around
a dream of water and sailboats
in angles only,
and white poles from the dancer's limbs
disjointed on the black background
from an initial symmetry;
other dancers
would move their padded bodies
in primary colors,
illusions of gesture
in which spheres,
inverted like cochlea,
are intersected by ominous planes;

Murders occur
down the street
not symbolically enough——
the wrecking ball
demolishes a building
that was still sprouting
window boxes
TV antennae
and the plaster cats
on the brick wall——
Today the roachman

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will spray poison
into the corners of the room:
We will live within its odor,
the roaches' blood becoming dust in our walls,
and we will listen to the light bodies fall.

Susan Grathwohl

LINES WRIT IN THE COMBAT ZONE

the war in the mountains was won
by simple mobility.
high trails are narrow
where tanks can't go.

can you move?
scatter through the rocks.
get down. hmmmmmm.
I love your warm breath.
cannons could never follow us
here
we carry our provisions with us
in our heads
(the necessities we find
more difficult to secure——
where does life end
death begin?)

move.

like a tribe of Bedouins
we pitch our tents at dusk.
the sun rose on an empty meadow
descends now behind campfires, a city
made of colored cloth.

there is dancing and music.

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Christ! we are happy like madmen!

some morning soon we rise and find ourselves
disappeared through the hills
the forests beyond
like seeds on the wind.

someday an old man tells a boy
here (arm sweeping across the valley)
here was once a nation
the next day, none.

here began the great dispersal
where began the great gathering.

Michael Hutchison

CANONS III

There is a current running
& cleansing through basic nature;
it reacts as it must, or is
brought to bear upon a location
which continually snaps away,
snaps one way, back,
& there is a stretch in counterpoint:
a dark crossing of the
easiest portions, there,
the clearest example of how
not to react or give impulse to
the craving;
the intuition brings it across;
the moment is of unequal lengths;
there are dual systems running
the entire pack,

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the single moving piece,
this schemata

look at this, it's not white
or clear; it may darken
upon impulse, or nerve twitching;
a vein rejects the blood of the leaf,
& it settles, as much as it may.

John Jacob

FREE TRANSLATION AND RECOMBINATION: Fragments from Octavio Paz

No ví girar las formas hasta desvanecerse
En claridad inmóvil . . .

*

By negation is my increase, my wealth.
Lord, Lord of erosions and dispersions,
I come to you in the whirlwind.

Into the oldest tree I drive my nail.

*

In the architecture of silence
Is no debate between the bees
And the statistics

Nor is there any dialectic among apes.

The wind blows. The rain obliterates
The mason's mark. On every psalm (on every
Mask of lime) a crown of fire appears.

*

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To rattle semantic seeds:
To bury the word, the kernel of fire,
In the body of Ceres:

poem, poem

Spilling the water and wine,
Spilling the fire.

*

Shake the book like a branch,
Detaching a phrase:

Voices and laughter,
Dancing and tambourines.

This is the winter solstice,
Who will awaken the stones?

Shake the book, detaching a word:
Pollywog, poison, periwig . . .

Say it: a penance of words.

*

But the huddled men in the alleys,
The huddled men in the squares & the mosques,
They took my gems and my grave-clothes.

I was covered with poems.

In the center of incandescence,
In the column of noon,
I was ringed with sand and insomnia.

I was covered with poems.

*

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And the sophistry of clocks.
And the provinces of abstract towns.

Dizzy geometries, vertigoes.

Not to fortell but to tell.
To say it: a paring away.

Nombre Antiguo del Fuego

in the tunnels of onyx
the circles of salt,
chimerical child of
calculus and of thirst:

From every stone appears a brief black tongue
Naming the scales of the night.

John Matthias

COMPLINE

Gudique is the chastening.
She is not a fish.

She is not the rocks where she browses
nor the pools.

The river when it opens
is not Gudique.

When its forgetfulness
falls from it,

when a cold wind leaks
upward through the drifts and folds and

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pours over the banks
and over the ferns

this is not Gudique.
Gudique is the chastening,

the river forgetting
Gudique is the river.

James McMichael

ODE

Isolde, I can see you now.
Laughing in your villa in Wisconsin.
Iambic pentameter
suicide notes spread out
on the bed between your legs.
Gesturing with your breasts!
Looking so nice.

Once on the Great
Cattle Drive West,
we messed and wet
the desert like a bed.
Now schoolboys learn

our miracles by heart: the
boiling of the waters
and the Feast of the Hysterical
Pregnancy. They call you my
"dark lady" and I say *Yes her*
black shawl was the night

sky, she
might have been an abbess, the way she
kept the body dark . . .
And still I keep the pictures

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from Syracuse, New York.
In one, it is Sunday,

and you are on the lawn,
swallowing icecubes, and I am designing
the children. Behind us the house
is sleeping like a baby,
like a fort. Either
my eyes were blue

or the world is paler
now. If only you
could see us then Isolde!
I was not handsome.
But in the new

edition of our collected love-
letters, there is an awful
mistake. I never said
you were beautiful. I said
your eyes your hands your hair
were beautiful. I said

scorn is the glove of seduction
and lonely is the light
shining in all our hearts.

John Romano

GETTING IT STRAIGHT

For Paul Blackburn

Here, two nights ago, a quiet
residential street: it was
actually very early morning
in this small town——a girl of nineteen
was shot in the head by "person or
persons unknown" which one paper immediately speculated

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was "a colored subject" & the other paper ignored, & even now
the papers cannot get it straight,
one reporting the bullet entered her cheek,
the other that it entered her temple
(both say it exited from her neck);
she was on the operating table for four hours,
on the critical list the first day after;
by now everyone connected with the case
has repeated their story, & on simple matters
of fact the papers still do not agree.

The fact is I am flat on my back
with disc trouble, thinking of the facts
that you are dying of cancer & there is a full moon,
a harvest moon that is silver-yellow & not as Lowell
would have it, "radiant with terror," just a blank
look, one that Susan reproduces correctly
as man-in-the-moon moronic like the unfortunate
farmer's teenage son who came to help
load the fresh produce in our car, anxious
& insistently being of use despite the father's low, "no, son,"
a hopeless & obviously well-intentioned retardate——

yet the moon may be seen as a warm emanation
or a frigid paleness by others,
as enemy, or friend
it hangs like a head
a moon for lovers, a moon for the dead: it can be
either & both or none of these, as a waning moon, or
she is mending, you are sinking, I am not presently
in pain, the boy is undoubtedly smiling,
the farmer is saying "no" in a weary
voice, the moon is saying yes & no out of its gray
moon mouth that has been stepped on,
the papers never can get it straight
& the error is self-perpetuating from day
to day in your "typographers' wasteland," it makes
a difference that one cannot get it straight. *4.IX.1971*

Robert Vas Dias

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John Tytell

A CONVERSATION WITH ALLEN GINSBERG

Int: What was Burroughs's impact on you and Kerouac in the mid-forties?

Ginsberg: Kerouac and I went to see Burroughs in his apartment around Riverside Drive below Columbia, Ninety-second Street. We were curious. We understood that Burroughs was very intelligent and to us mysterious because he had been to Europe in the thirties, and had married a Hungarian countess, we thought, to get her out of Europe. He showed us pictures he had of Berlin friends in 1936, and told us about people going around and saying, "Won't you have some uppies, my dear?" for cocaine, introducing that whole mythology of old bohemian European use of drugs.

Int: Had you tried drugs before meeting Burroughs?

Ginsberg: No.

Int: So that was a crucial introduction?

Ginsberg: He didn't immediately introduce drugs at all. It wasn't until about a year later through Huncke and Vicky Arminger who was in that auto crash with me.

Int: The one that Jane Kramer describes?

Carl Solomon: Before you went to P. I.? [Columbia Psychiatric Institute]

Ginsberg: There were a lot of Benzedrine inhalers so the first drug was speed which was introduced by Vicky rather than Bill, and then around '45 or '46 through Huncke and Bill Garver and Phil White there was morphine on the scene. So I took morphine at about the same time Bill first did, in the same week. He has described that situation, meeting Huncke, and trying to unload some morphine not knowing really what it was. Bill had a gun he was trying to get rid of, and so he traded it for a box of stolen Syrettes of morphine—— these were war stocks of morphine that soldiers carried around as part of their first aid. Grass didn't come in until about a year later, in '47.

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Int: Was that the first time grass appeared in New York?

Ginsberg: Well, for me anyway. Burroughs had had some in the heydays, gaydays of East St. Louis toodleloo.

Solomon: Ronnie Gold and I used to eat benny inhalers in about '49.

Ginsberg: That's what Kerouac used a lot for writing at first, too. And that's what Joan Burroughs took, but she was taking two or three inhalers a day, finally, when we were all living together a little later.

Int: In what other ways did Burroughs influence you?

Ginsberg: With books: Kafka, Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*, Spengler's *Decline of the West* which he gave Kerouac, Blake, Rimbaud, Yeats's *A Vision*, Cocteau's *Opium*.

Solomon: Melville?

Ginsberg: No, that was Jack's interest. Especially, a little later, *Pierre*, because of the euphuistic, packed poetical Shakespearean quality of the prose.

Int: And the Gothicism. Were there other books?

Ginsberg: Yes. Celine's *Journey to the End of the Night*, Auden, Hart Crane, and Eliot which I borrowed. It was my first introduction to modern literature really, and also to modern ideas.

Int: Would you say there were similarities between Eliot and Burroughs?

Ginsberg: St. Louis origins, yes. Going to England finally. They also had the same banker look which Bill always had but which he cultivated more later on. Bill actually applied to be in the O.S.S. because he knew Wild Bill Donovan from Harvard, and he was of that elite aristocracy that would have fitted into it, except that he had some early record of having cut off his little finger with a chicken shears to see what it was like.

Solomon: Wasn't that to get out of the service?

Ginsberg: And Bill's hatred of the American secret-police-bureaucracy grows from the fact that they wouldn't have him in it. I mean he *knows* them, that social type and mind.

Int: When were you introduced to gnostic ideas?

Ginsberg: The first time I heard the word *gnostic* mentioned was when Kerouac and I went to see Raymond Weaver, at Columbia, who had done the first biography of Melville, *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic*, and had discovered the text of *Billy Budd*. Weaver was this great scholar who shared an office with Mark Van Doren, and Jack brought Weaver a novel called *The Sea Is My Brother*, his first poetical novel, and Weaver gave him a little list of books to read, like the *Egyptian Gnostics* and either the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* or the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, I can't remember.

Solomon: Burroughs's first contact with me was when he read my first

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article. He said the insights were psychological and not deep psychic.

Int: I felt Burroughs's influence in your last book, *The Fall of America.*

Ginsberg: Thematically, yes. But technically, Bunting, saying to condense more, that I had "too many words," getting rid of extra syntactical fat allows more perfume to verbs and nouns.

Int: How come you chose as your Preface to *Fall of America* that selection from Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* on adhesiveness? It seemed so ironic?

Ginsberg: Except that it does point to a goal and an ideal and a human potentiality that America was supposed to fulfill because that was the prophecy, the need, and the psychological condition of American democracy, and Whitman named it and particularized it very clearly in that passage. Also it gives credence, historical background, and traditional justification to my own adhesive poems.

Solomon: I was interested when I read *Fall* mainly in the sex, being a Bronx boy.

Int: In the tender obscenity of poems like "Please Master"?

Solomon: And "Graffiti."

Int: "Jessore Road" is especially Blakean, its metric, rhyme scheme, and the whole feeling of the poem like a long extended "London."

Ginsberg: The consequence of three years working on Blake songs. It was the first poem I wrote to music with chords, intended to be chanted and sung. I had finished two albums of Blake's *Innocence and Experience.*

Int: I think I saw you singing the poem on television last year with a whole room of people?

Ginsberg: Yeah. With Dylan and Happy Traum. I wrote "Jessore Road" to have something really sublime to present to Dylan to record. So the performance that you saw on TV was a first performance without any rehearsal because I had finished typing the poem that afternoon, and I had written it the day before.

Int: You have written a number of poems in a very short period of time, haven't you? Didn't you write "Sunflower Sutra" while Kerouac was impatiently standing at your door waiting for you?

Ginsberg: Also poems like "A Strange New Cottage in Berkeley" and "Supermarket in California" which incidentally were part of one composition, and later cut apart.

Int: How were you affected by Kerouac's notion of no revision?

Ginsberg: "Sunflower Sutra" is almost completely untouched from the original. It took me a long time to get on to Kerouac's idea of writing without revision. I did it by going to his house where he sat me down with typewriter and said, "Just write a poem!" So I did about the

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Statue of Liberty, which I never published because it wasn't any good. But I did get the idea of how interesting it could be, the accidents that come up if you commit yourself irrevocably to accepting the traces of your mind during the composition.

Int: What led you to your concept of "undifferentiated consciousness"?

Ginsberg: Blake.

Int: The experience in 1948?

Ginsberg: Which convinced me that it was possible——just like the Cézanne thing, reproducing the *petits sensations* of experience. That's why I became interested in Cézanne after Blake, because when I looked at his painting I got a sudden shock of eternal thrill, that sensation of eternal space being reconstituted——but the experience of Blake was that through poetry you could catalyze in the reader the experience of *Pater Omnipotens Eterna Deus*, an experience of eternal consciousness; but then later on, reading Zen and other philosophy, I would find different nomenclature for it.

Int: In which of your own poems do you think you've come closest to achieving this quality?

Ginsberg: I don't know because it seems to happen accidentally, but apparently in *Howl* where it is sufficient to alter people's minds.

Int: What about poems like "Journal Night Thoughts" or "Television Was A Baby Crawling Toward That Deathchamber"?

Ginsberg: No, that's like a full chaotic consciousness. There is too much excitement and activity in the consciousness, that's amphetamine partly. So it depends on what we mean by "undifferentiated consciousness" . . . but if we mean empty, *Sunyatā*, in which everything comes in quietly, simultaneously, then I don't think I've written anything quiet enough for that——but to get enough excitement to break people's mind systems open, through rhythmic means partly, *Howl* works.

Int: Burroughs was interested in conditioning, wasn't he?

Ginsberg: Yeah. Another book that he gave us at that early time was a book by someone named Jacobson called *Progressive Relaxation* which was a sort of Western homemade yoga——just lie down and begin untensing your whole body from the skull to the toes, muscle by muscle and portion by portion, which is similar to the *Satipaṭṭhāna*, or body-feeling-mind and mind-object meditation of Burmese Buddhists, which is primary Hinayana Buddhist Yoga.

Int: What about word conditioning?

Ginsberg: That was covered by Korzybski's *Science and Sanity* immediately when he pointed out that words were not identical to the things that they represent. And the best example of that was when Lucien

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Carr and I had this big argument as to whether if you carved a walking stick on the moon, was it art or not? Burroughs said, "I never heard of such a stupid question!" In other words, art is whatever you want to define it as, it's only a three-letter word. Burroughs's attitude was that we were giving the word an essential identity outside of any use we might make of it, so if we wanted to use the word art to describe the walking stick on the moon, then it was art, and if we didn't want to use the word art, it wasn't. He just said: "It's too starved an argument for my sword," so he cut through arbitrary conceptions like a Zen master. It's like the goose in the bottle *koan*: if you put a full-grown goose inside a bottle with a narrow neck, how do you get the goose out without breaking the bottle, or damaging or bruising the goose? That's one of the first *koans* that you meditate on if you're studying Zen. Another is the *koan* "Does the dog have a Buddha nature" the Zen master Jo-jo was once asked, and he answered, "Wu," which means no in Chinese. Why did Jo-jo say *Wu*? . . . Well how do you get the goose out?

Int: I don't know. How?

Ginsberg: (claps hands loudly) It's out! Same way you put it in, with words. It's only a conceptual bottle. So Burroughs resolved the problem of whether a walking stick on the moon was art or not in exactly the same way.

Int: Did Pound reinforce this approach to language?

Ginsberg: I hadn't started reading Pound then.

Int: What about when you visited him in '67? Was he talking then?

Ginsberg: A little bit, in answer to very specific questions. I have a journal I kept on that which should appear in the next *City Lights Journal*. I wrote it a long time back, and gave it to Laughlin [James Laughlin, publisher of New Directions], and he sent it to Olga Rudge who got upset, and I couldn't at first figure out over what. Laughlin said it was because I had mentioned in the journal about how I had smoked a stick of grass at the table on Pound's eighty-first birthday. Then I saw Olga Rudge earlier this year in London, and apparently she objected to my quoting something Pound said to me. He said, "*The Cantos* are a mess, stupidity and ignorance all the way through, and the worst stupidity was stupid, suburban anti-Semitic prejudice."

Int: Why did she object to that? I mean, had Pound said it?

Ginsberg: Uh hum. But she maintained that Pound was not anti-Semitic, and it was a misunderstanding to think of him as anti-Semitic in the beginning.

Int: Was Pound's statement an apology?

Ginsberg: Well, she didn't want to see it as an apologia, and it wasn't

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precisely, I think, he was just being generous and extraordinarily sociable, and Prospero-like, taking some of the burden.

Int: I know how important Buddhism is in connection with your own work and Kerouac's, but is there any connection to Burroughs's?

Ginsberg: There is often an emphasis on open blue space like nirvana or transcendence, of conceptual mind prison . . . especially in his recent work, the idea of empty space in every direction which is very similar to the Buddhist view of *Sunyatā*, oddly enough. "Out of the body experience," or "escape from the frightened, nagging, aging flesh"——that's Burroughs's phrase——is like the Buddhist view of release or *moksha*, liberation from impermanence, from metamorphosis into an unconditioned beginningless and endless suchness, nirvana——But Bill wouldn't go for nirvana, as it were, he would see that as a con. But nonetheless what he seems to be after recently, and I think it was implicit all along, is another modality or plane of consciousness where view is unconditioned. The images in all of the books following *Naked Lunch*, like "the blue tide" that comes in on yage, or the idea of "rub out the word," "all out of the body and into space," as at the end of the *Yage Letters*, indicate a place that is very similar to the infinite spaciousness of Tibetan Buddhism.

Int: Still isn't this search, no matter what its end, conducted along a corridor of brutal self-immolation and explosions of pain?

Ginsberg: In one view that pain is part of the "apparent thought, feeling, and sensory phenomena," but Burroughs's late theory is that there's a squeeze on the body by a virus coming from Venus to make it as painful a place as possible, purposely contracting everybody into limited space, so Burroughs's remedy is unlimited space.

Solomon: Did Burroughs and Genêt have conversations when they met in Chicago?

Ginsberg: Yes, a lot of conversation, I was with them. They loved each other and cared for each other, Bill talked a lot and Genêt listened and laughed a lot, and told me Burroughs was very sweet and tender.

Solomon: We once characterized Burroughs as the American Genêt.

Ginsberg: Genêt told me he had read Burroughs in French, and that he liked his work and his person, and they went around in taxicabs together and marched together in tear-gas situations.

Solomon: What happened then, Genêt escaped into the sewer or something?

Ginsberg: No, the guards said that we had to disperse: So David Dellinger, who was negotiating with the guards, called me up to chant mantras to keep everything quiet which I did for about twenty minutes in this tight situation. Then Dellinger announced that we had

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been ordered to disperse. We felt we had a legal right to stay, all those who wanted to leave could and the rest would invoke passive resistance, sit on the ground and offer themselves for arrest. Genêt, being in the country illegally, having come in through the Canadian border, had to cut. So I think Richard Seaver took Genêt away, and Burroughs and I stayed. . . . And Genêt gave a speech to the Yippies saying that he hoped that some day the skyline of Chicago would be covered with vines, that he felt it was necessary for writers to be with the younger people in body as well as sympathy.

Solomon: I remember reading that Genêt said at that time that he had had much experience eluding the police so it was nothing for him.

Int: I'd like to return to Burroughs's theory of evil. What would you say is its source?

Ginsberg: Well, originally it was analyzed by William Lee, the factualist (perhaps representative of a trust of giant insects from another galaxy) in *Naked Lunch*. But since then, in *Nova Express* and *Ticket That Exploded*, and more recently in *Exterminator!* and *The Job* and *Wild Boys*, the agency of the hallucinating Word is a virus from Venus so it's not other galaxies anymore——it's an external, extraterrestrial threat from within our own solar system.

Int: Would you go along with the notion that madness is the norm in Burroughs's fiction?

Ginsberg: I would say the norm is metamorphosis. In Burroughs's fiction, madness is the normal behavior of the political world, but it's also a medium that A. J. Benway and the factualists are able to handle and deal with and use as the material for their examination . . . and sometimes get caught in as is possible for an explorer to get caught in a sticky wicket, or as Burroughs himself feels that he has been caught in certain areas that he could not handle with drugs like psylocybin and LSD, or yage originally. But madness is *not* his ultimate goal, just the obstacle. This is why Burroughs's geography is so similar to gnostic and Tibetan procedural maps. The wrathful deities are the guardians of the gate to *Sunyatã*, blue space . . . except Burroughs is ascribing all these wrathful deities to a plot by the Control Forces. So his books really are investigations of his consciousness to "trace along the word lines" to the *source* of the control.

Int: So he has a greater conspiratorial sense of history than even you do, I guess?

Ginsberg: Mine is a little more mundane like investigations of CIA involvement with dope trafficking in Indochina (which was I think a successful investigation).

Int: What about applying Longfellow's remark on the transcendentalist

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utopians, that they expressed the "divine insanity of noble minds"?

Ginsberg: I think Burroughs would reject that as sentimental rhetoric because he feels that he is more of a precise scientist investigating regions of consciousness forbidden to common understanding by the Control agencies, and the *danger* of such investigation is physical pain, madness, "the Ovens," but the factualist investigator armed with various antivirus exercises such as rubbing out the word can ultimately resist, though there may be certain aspects which you can't resist . . . and what you can't resist that most dismays him at present comes in the phrase "At Hiroshima all was lost" . . . or so he said this year when I went to see him to find out what he was thinking lately. He said that the project was to get out of the body––as the soul or spirit gets out of the body––but that the problem with the atom bomb is that its temperature is so high that it's a "killer of souls." So human beings have arrived at a situation where they can be the Killer of Souls. So I said, traditionally, with the gnostics or Buddhists, there is no soul to kill, the void is impervious to the meta-physical heat of the bomb. He answered that all that Buddhist and Hindu mythology was very amateur, compared with the kind of precise investigations that might be conducted now in a highly chemical and technological age. For Burroughs, yoga and Buddhism are primitive methods of achieving detachment; it can now be done more immediately through electronic means.

Int: But less intuitional.

Ginsberg: Well, just as he uses the physical table as a place to put his mind to cut up, putting the words on the table rather than inner meditation only––so he sees mechanical aids, like a Yankee inventor, as being a possibility; and also he says we can't turn back, we've already advanced into a highly mechanized, electronic dimension, and that may be the Path. So he puts down the rural commune back-to-nature aspect of what Gary Snyder and myself are doing, saying that it's retrogressive, that we're too deeply plunged into the science-fiction reality situation now. For Burroughs the problem is not so much the fact of science or experiment, as it is that it's being *controlled*, that secrets are being kept––like the Army is the only one that has real license to experiment with acid anymore and maybe scientology is another extension of the CIA network. So his idea is "All secrets out" now.

Int: So resistance becomes openness?

Ginsberg: Right, by making use of secret material and turning it against Control Agencies, and by realizing that there are a few simple principles of technology that everyone can understand and master which

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have been obscured by the authoritarian Controllers. That's why he's been experimenting with the cutting up of sounds and playing them back, in other words feeding back the control images to the Control Central in the hope of setting up anti-image consciousness feedback that will explode their Control machine.

Int: That's in *The Ticket That Exploded.*

Ginsberg: And which he practiced at Chicago when he came into the Convention Hall with his tape recorder with all sorts of riot sounds from Tangiers like shutters slamming and started spraying all these sounds out on the balcony of the convention, and within an hour the place was in an uproar.

Int: Is the terrifying chaos in Burroughs's fiction purposeful?

Ginsberg: I think so. He would maintain that he is making propositions and hypotheses which he examines by means of language and imagination. So chaos——transfiguration is a better word, really——is only the preliminary guardian of the sacred extraterrestrial area of consciousness. The end is not *dérèglement de tous les sens* but clear vision, not chaos but total silence and calm like a great blue tide flooding the body. And *dérèglement de tous les sens* is not even so much a means as it is a by-product of the pursuit through to the other side of phenomena, the disruption of the apparently normal order determined by the CIA and the Control Forces. In fact he feels that they are responsible for the chaotic apparitions, the fear, the Ovens, the images of death. What he is saying over and over, also, is that death is the greatest con, that it has been created by the Controllers to scare everybody, and there's really nothing to fear.

Int: Is he still involved with the scientologists?

Ginsberg: Only in denouncing them, he wrote a long attack on them as a fascist organization in *Rolling Stone*. I went to supper with him and Girodias and heard another terror story about the scientologists——which is that Girodias published a book attacking scientology, and they sued him to try and stop the book and they lost the suit, so they organized a letter-writing campaign to the British Home Office complaining that Girodias was a pornographer, and so the Police raided Girodias and seized 125,000 volumes and drove him out of business in England. So he couldn't defend himself because his assets had been seized. And many things like that have happened, so Burroughs has attacked the scientologists as an extension of the control apparatus that offers people hints of exercises that are useful, but which hangs them up in the middle of the exercise.

Int: How does Burroughs see his own function as a writer relating to this control system?

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Ginsberg: The virus from Venus (as before a trust of giant insects from another galaxy) or as in other times the CIA, or the economic control monopolists, or the antisex forces, are all resumed in terms of Power Addiction. So Burroughs wants to discover the source, where the original imposition of brainwash comes from. He sees his job also as an explorer and inventor of how-to books, how to combat brainwash, how to liberate consciousness from the conditions imposed on it by the Control Forces.

Int: So if the reader can read his books, he is along the way to violating that conditioning by virtue of experiencing Burroughs's own techniques, just as the readers who read *The Waste Land* learned a new kind of perception?

Ginsberg: Yes. Throughout his books there are all these suggestions on how to observe your own speech and behavior to see who were the people who influenced you and to trace your attitudes, gestures, styles, words, and tones of voice to the original people you were imitating, your father, teachers, lovers, or whoever was leaving an impression on you. Last time I saw him he told me that "whoever leaves an impression on you is a vampire." His statement was so impressive . . . striking I mean . . . curious . . . that I went home that night and had a dream of William Blake as a vampire because Blake had in a sense invaded my consciousness, left an impression which struck me and stuck me there revolving around the corpse of that impression for decades . . . which was a violation of the Tantric injunction not to cling to any impression. So Burroughs is saying that for his own role he wants to make "himself" obsolete.

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Edward Marcotte

THE SPACE OF THE NOVEL

Of all the facets of the novel as an art form *setting* is nowadays given the least serious attention in criticism. When it does happen to come under discussion it is almost always considered from a functional standpoint. Setting is seen as supportive of the main action in that it foreshadows, sets the mood, or aids in establishing the credibility of the protagonists by underscoring their feelings, their psychology. In this way setting is reduced to a mechanical system of indicators. There is nothing wrong in any of this, of course, except that it sometimes tends to obscure the importance of setting in and of itself as it is presented in many works of fiction.

It is perhaps constitutive of our acquired responses to things, not only within fictional works but in the world at large, that setting, together with its components in the form of objects, landscapes, and spaces, tends to have an ulterior significance ascribed to it. Setting, after all, represents the inanimate, into which we want to project some of our own animateness. In the novel this can sometimes reach the extreme of bestowing human attributes on a setting, a tendency especially common among many nineteenth–century novelists, thus giving it the status of a character. Hawthorne does this in *The House of the Seven Gables* when he writes, "The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance." Whereas here we have the setting absurdly humanized, the history of the novel can give us, on the other hand, examples like Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, in which the main action is interrupted by long background essays on

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architecture that have nothing to do with character or the movement of the story.

But what part does setting ordinarily play in fiction? In his popular book *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster has whole sections on "People," "Story," "Plot," and even "Prophecy." But he seems to consider setting of so little importance as an "aspect" of the novel that he hardly mentions it at all. (One is sure to find chapters on setting in manuals on the craft of fiction writing, but this is from the point of view of mechanics; in this context, the status and necessity of setting are taken as assumed.) As Mary McCarthy points out in her essay "One Touch of Nature," for the nineteenth-century novelist the presentation of setting, or scenic description, was just as primary a feature of the writer's craft as the delineation of character or plot.

But the day has long passed since an author could feel free to indulge in lengthy descriptive passages for their own sake. The novel, as we understand it, is something primarily about character, and it is that which captures our interest as readers. We cannot imagine a novel written entirely about a landscape. If such fiction were ever written it would be unreadable. A painting, conversely, can represent a pure landscape, entirely without human forms. Much of the world's painting, in fact, falls under this category. Poetry, like painting, can occupy itself directly with setting. And even a work of nonfiction, such as a collection of travel impressions, can be made up of descriptions of landscapes and places.

It seems that because the novel, in attesting to the linearity of our orientation, is essentially a vehicle of action, of an historical dynamic, comprised of events and conflicts unfolding in *time*, the spatial dimensions in it become secondary. In this sense the novel is precisely that form of representation for which spatial requirements are marginal; hence, though every novel must have a setting, this circumstance is not considered of primary concern.

There exist ample reasons for thinking so. For example, it is usually thought that most readers, at least most modern readers, find long descriptive passages boring and tend to skip over them to get back to the main action. That is why novelists nowadays employ the technique of interspersing this material with dialogue and action. Moreover, the reader usually forms his own picture of

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things regardless of an author's specifications concerning setting, or interior, or even the physical appearance of the characters. As a matter of fact, it is difficult for many readers to follow and assimilate into coherent "pictures" the details of an author's description, particularly if it is lengthy and complex.

Sartre, in *The Psychology of Imagination*, discusses at some length the way we form images, or mental pictures, and gives ample evidence of how flimsy, inconstant, and lacking in details these presentations actually are. As for the experience of reading a novel, Sartre suggests that the images we form——our mental picturing of the scenes and characters——are very few in number and incomplete, and that they seldom occur while we are actually in the process of reading, but tend to come *between*, when we have put the book down and our thoughts wander over the material in retrospect.

Having considered these things we might conclude that setting, at least when presented in detail or considered by itself, is superfluous in fiction——largely irrelevant from the modern reader's point of view, and betraying a sloppy indulgence on the part of the author. There are exceptions, of course, such as Tolstoy, who can make the minutiae of description interesting, and Proust, who elevated nuance and rendering of place and physiognomy into an art in itself, so that you must be able to appreciate this aspect of his work or miss much of what he has to offer. In the main, however, a novelist cannot get away with much purely descriptive matter. Our attention span and our levels of response are evolving further and further away from the static and toward the linear and the fast-moving.

Our principal concern is setting, in the sense of place, landscape, and "atmosphere." Description in the sense of physical delineation of persons, or decor, has inevitably crept into the picture because these things are closely related to the presentation of setting, insofar as they come under the general designation of objective space and the representation of its contents. Setting, though it falls under this heading, and though its concerns are spatial, constitutes a particular category.

I would like to suggest that for novelists of a certain temperament, setting, rather than being a mere stage or background on

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which to locate an action, seems to be as important as character itself. There is usually a strong romantic strain in novelists of this type. Among modern writers Lawrence Durrell and Boris Pasternak seem to fall into this category. But the tendency is particularly evident, nowadays at least, in works of a somewhat secondary status, notably in the genre novel, the Gothic romance, the western, the science fiction novel, all of which are in large measure defined by their setting.

As an example of preoccupation with setting within a literary classic we might consider this passage from the beginning pages of *Wuthering Heights*:

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. "Wuthering" being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

It would be easy (and natural, in terms of our orientation and our schooling in the devices of romantic fiction) to analyze this passage and others like it along the old familiar lines of foreshadowing, symbolism, "parallels to the moods of the actors," etc. I'm sure this very paragraph has been subjected to such analysis thousands of times. But what we are doing, by virtue of a kind of anthropomorphism, is delivering the scene over to the protagonists, making it subservient to them and to the human drama they will enact upon these premises. The procedure can be extended: the character in turn is appropriated to fulfill some *action*, all of which incorporates itself into a *plot*, which in its turn is illustrative of some general truth, or *idea*. What we have done is to pursue a system of bracketing to a central schema, a kind of nucleus of the action. But a novel isn't its theme or its schema. (It would be more appropriate to say that the novel, rather than being the flesh that

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harbors an internal schema, is, in itself and as a whole, a schema of the world.) As far as passages such as the one quoted above, are concerned, it would be equally possible to say that the protagonists are inserted for the purpose of justifying the setting.

It seems likely that Emily Bronte was just as interested in writing about a setting that inspired her as about a human drama. It is even conceivable that in creating *Wuthering Heights* she was *first of all* intent on depicting an old house on the moors, for which, after all, the novel is named, and that the characters were introduced as a means to this realization. Must such a proposition be deemed preposterous? Have the aims of novel writing been established definitively and for all time? Isn't it more likely that the novel is a hybrid form of representation, and that among the ranks of its practitioners are to be found poets and painters as well as historians and amateur psychologists?

It seems to me that the question is not whether some novelists have a special fixation on inanimate things and on settings, but rather how the novel as a medium is equipped to accommodate such tendencies.

Time is usually said to be the dimension of the novel. True, it is a peculiar sort of time——a time collapsed, telescoped, reversed, juggled, and annihilated. Yet time predominates. But space, as far as prose narrative is concerned, is much more elusive, and ambiguous. How does the novel realize spatiality? Other art forms such as painting or cinema fill out a sort of pseudospace: the work can imitate, more or less adequately, the space of the world; moreover, as a framed object, it occupies some part of that space. But what space does a novel fill——the space occupied by the physical book, pages bound in cloth or paper? Or is it the dimensions of the printed page itself, so many lines of so many inches across, with so many letters per inch? But can we then say that the fiction is somehow constituted within these printed characters?

This has to be nonsense, of course. Fictional space exists in the mind alone——regardless of whether we are speaking of a novel that gets written or one that is being read. Author and reader are not so far apart in this respect, though this is not to say that the reader experiences the writing just as the author imagined it in the creative act. Yet when we speak of fictional space another ambi-

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guity arises. As the space of the mind is *no* space, mental images lack pictorial substantiality, since there is nothing analogous to a picture screen inside one's head. What can we mean, then, when we say that we as readers enter into a "world" created by the author of a fiction, or see "reality" from the protagonist's point of view? What are the actual dimensions of our participation? They must be fairly diminutive, it would seem. Yet how can we account for the intensity of involvement, the sense of sharing in "real" experiences, that a good novel affords us?

Certainly a great and mysterious power is exercised over us whenever we "get into" a well-written novel. Here we will resort to such generalizations as "it's all due to the power of words." But then we stop. For beyond this point lie the domains of linguistics and experimental psychology. Printed words, Merleau-Ponty suggests, have the property of effacing themselves as we become involved in their message, and this self-effacing feature of language, its manner of becoming invisible, constitutes its perfection.

The further we pursue the question the more thoroughly fiction reveals its utter spatial dispossession. By this very fact, however, it seems to make known a silent claim upon the spatial world. What is perhaps sought (by both author and reader) is to attach fiction's meaning and schema onto the expanse of the real world in a significant consolidation. This may be the underlying reason why physical space can be so easily forfeited in a prose fiction work: its plans are ulterior——it seeks to incorporate itself into the hard space of reality by a kind of metaphysical fusion.

The world, I would like to suggest, has for the novelist an aspect of radical incompleteness. But for the kind of novelist whose preoccupation is with setting, this incompleteness is situated within place and landscape itself. The world appears as though set for some drama or realization that never seems to effectively take place. It is not that this novelist simply wants to capture and reproduce his enthrallment with the physiognomy of things and places, for this, I believe, would not be a sufficient impetus, especially in view of what is lost in the transposition, i.e., the very fullness of space. The world and its landscapes are indeed a plenum, but this is perhaps just the problem——it is *all* landscape and there seems to be no room to assimilate it all to the cognitive

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demands of the novelistic sensibility. The physical world, plenum though it be, tends to be felt as evanescent. It recedes even in its static obstinacy. It is, in fact, a setting-in-itself. But our very concept of a setting implies a deficit in self-sufficiency. The structural imperatives of the imagination demand that a setting be accommodated by a significant drama. The world lacks sufficient drama, at least within the scale of everyday experience, but while one kind of novelist may start by schematizing whatever drama already exists in the world, the novelist who is oriented toward setting arrives at drama via landscape.

Viewpoint, particularly in the modern novel, bears an important relationship to setting. Writers such as James, Faulkner, Joyce, and Dos Passos broadened the possibilities of viewpoint in a number of ways. But with Robbe-Grillet, to cite one especially interesting example, the point of view is not located in a protagonist's perspective on reality, nor within his stream of consciousness, nor outside, in the arena of history and journalism, where Dos Passos endeavors to place it——but rather in the eye itself. The typical Robbe-Grillet scene is presented as though picked up by the scanning eye, from a precise location in space, while bypassing, or attempting to bypass, the interpretative functions of the mind. The eye in a Robbe-Grillet novel does not uncover or evaluate, but only registers data.

Two examples, the first from *Ulysses*, the second from *La Jalousie*, might illustrate the difference in spatiotemporal orientation between Robbe-Grillet and one other important writer:

> Then they sang the second verse of the *Tantum Ergo* and Canon O'Hanlon got up again and censed the Blessed Sacrament and knelt down and he told Father Conroy that one of the candles was just going to set fire to the flowers and Father Conroy got up and settled it all right and she could see the gentleman winding his watch and listening to the works and she swung her leg more in and out in time. It was getting darker but he could see and he was looking all the time that he was winding the watch or whatever he was doing to it and then he put it back and put his hands back into his pockets.
>
> Starting from the crest, the slope is divided horizontally into three parts: an irregular strip of brush and two cultivated

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> patches of different ages. The brush is reddish-colored, dotted here and there with green bushes. A clump of trees marks the highest point of cultivation in this sector; it occupies the corner of a rectangular patch where the bare earth can still be distinguished in spots between the clusters of young leaves. Lower down, the second patch, in the shape of a trapezoid, is being harvested: the plate-sized white discs of the cut trunks are about as numerous as the adult trees still standing.

What stands out in this comparison, aside from the fact that the first example is primarily about people and the second about landscape, is the predominance of images and ideas having to do with action and process in the example from Joyce, as opposed to an equal fixation on spatial forms and relationships in the Robbe-Grillet. The two quotations were chosen pretty much at random, and I think they are typical of their respective authors. What is interesting in view of the present argument is the pronounced shift from the temporal to the spatial. Before Robbe-Grillet the novel had never really ventured into this dimension. For though all novels must have some setting, and some novels even emphasize it, no novelist before Robbe-Grillet had focused so intensively, and almost to the exclusion of everything else, on purely graphic descriptions of spatial phenomena. And it is this, rather than any difficulty of comprehension as such, that makes Robbe-Grillet's novels seem so strange and taxing to the reader's attention. For his language is simple and direct, and by his own avowals there is nothing "there" but what is described, no hidden meanings to interpret, no psychological "depths" to the characters.

At all events, Robbe-Grillet has attempted, and achieved, what many previous novelists had merely aspired to: the unqualified rendering of setting. But in the process he has forfeited (or deliberately avoided) those romantic aspects——anthropomorphic, if you will——of place, and of the visible world, that had preeminently characterized the conventional novelist's appropriation of setting. The equation is precise: in fictional narration, setting, in the form of purely spatial contents, can achieve autonomy only to the degree that it forfeits those qualities of mood, metaphor, and parallelism by which it has conventionally been linked with character and action.

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If prose fiction has indeed condescended to sacrifice spatiality by virtue of an ulterior project for reclaiming the space of the actual world, then Robbe-Grillet has undermined this aim by claiming for the novel a spatiality as hard and absolute as that of reality: thus a fiction that is hermetic and self-sufficient, having relinquished its metaphorical connections as well as its metaphysical claims. In the author's own words, it does not even aspire to be conventionally realistic. Accepting its circumscribed finitude, it places itself on the line, as it were, and thus expends itself, leaving nothing extraneous to exact a subsequent claim upon reality. As Roland Barthes expresses it, referring to Robbe-Grillet's manner of presenting the object, it becomes "drained," "consumed," "used up." Thus we end up with a form of fiction that has succumbed entirely to its fictionality.

But can fiction ever achieve a genuine autonomy in this sense? There is of course a question of degree here. We cannot properly speak of the ultimate autonomy of anything in the world, unless, perhaps, we are to speak of Kantian *noumena*. "Autonomous" is a relative term. We think of objects, for example, as autonomous insofar as we presume an enduring physical world, but in the sense of things perceived and conditioned by the understanding they cannot be strictly autonomous. With this consideration any work of fiction can be called autonomous *in a sense*. Certainly Robbe-Grillet has produced novels which uphold an autonomy of a sort——in their focus on spatiality, the elimination of metaphor, and so forth. But this does not preclude the possibility of considering their "autonomous" status from another angle. The specific areas in which any prose fiction, including *Le Voyeur* and *Dans le labyrinthe*, falls short of autonomy are revealed by the nature of the mental image itself, through which all prose fiction makes its presentation. And even Robbe-Grillet, no matter how geometrical and precise his descriptions of objects and environments, cannot carry the hard space of the world over into the "theater" of the reader's mind. The body is left out, and where this concerns the reader's physical human body, which must be excluded from any participation in the fiction, but which, nevertheless, must act to sustain it (i.e., in holding the book in the hands, turning the pages, and scanning the sentences with the

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eyes), the situation amounts to a sustained lack, an exclusion.

Setting remains that most ambiguous part of the novelist's art, attesting to his unquenchable yearning to seize and incorporate landscape, to achieve the ideal fusion of the spatial and the schematic. In certain arts, such as painting, where the object is set before us in space, we speak of contemplation as the ideal relationship between the perceiver and the work. But it would be spurious to designate our mode of participation in a fictional narrative as contemplative. There is nothing, strictly speaking, to contemplate. Certainly we do not contemplate the words on the page, for, as already suggested, they disappear into their meaning. Fiction, in the final analysis, presents us with strictly verbal information, and in spite of the popular saying, no amount of words will ever add up to a picture.

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GOING TO THE MOVIES

Jonathan Baumbach

SHOW-OFFS

The Long Goodbye

Seeing movies, writing about them is a more subjective business than the authoritative voice of most reviews admits. One runs into a good deal of self-deception and cant among reviewers who try to make the fleeting reality on the screen seem unequivocal. There is so much fantasy invested in moviegoing that movie reviews tend to tell us more about the reviewer than the reviewed.

This is prelude to saying that Robert Altman's odd version of Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye*, which has many incidental virtues, disappointed me and that my disappointment may have as much to do with false expectations as with the weaknesses of the film. The movie I witnessed didn't so much demythify the private eye, as reviewers advertised, as offer him to us as something else altogether——a version of the Elliott Gould persona, a wisecracking, crude, and shy New York Jew displaced in a futuristic California. Updating the Chandler novel to the seventies, Altman's *The Long Goodbye* is an exercise in self-revealing style, a showcase for the director's impressively eccentric cinematic manner.

Gould's Philip Marlowe is one of those devious schlemiels who fends off vindication by pretending to be less formidable than he is (or secretly thinks he is). Although he seems ineffectual and vulnerable for a man in his profession, Gould's shamus is cool under pressure (as cool as any of his Marlowe predecessors) or, depending on how you want to read him, oblivious to the world outside him. The wisecrack helps him to keep his distance from others and, more importantly, from his own feelings. Living alone

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with his cat, seemingly uninterested in women, this Philip Marlowe leads a lonely, empty, and violated life. Yet since the Gould character (like the movie as a whole) has an improvised quality, we don't really believe that Marlowe has an existence beyond the moment of the film. Altman makes us aware that we are watching Elliott Gould impersonating an unlikely, mumbling private eye——everyone mumbles in an Altman film——comically out of step with the world he pretends to inhabit. Gould wears a fifties vintage bar mitzvah suit and drives a forties vintage Lincoln. Altman's attitude toward his protagonist as toward his material in general seems to me loosely defined, and what's finally wrong with *The Long Goodbye* is that for all its artistic pretensions, *all* of them, the film is not quite serious, not serious enough to carry the freight of its pretensions.

The visual richness of *The Long Goodbye* and the exhilarating, tricky ending in which Gould's Marlowe kills his one-time friend, Terry Lennox, leads one to expect more from the work than it actually delivers, which may further explain my dissatisfaction. Most impressive about Altman's distinctive film, even more impressive than its sharply observed detailing of a dehumanized California, is the work's elaborately sustained rhythm. Altman is a master of a highly controlled frantic pace as if some volcanic nightmare of chaos (or hysteria) were just below the surface of his world, threatening to explode. Altman generates tension in his film not through plot, which seems to exist as an afterthought (you almost feel copies of the Chandler novel ought to be given out to the audience in advance), but through movement and image. *The Long Goodbye* is a disturbing and abrasive experience——Altman's best film to date, two hours of variations on his signature, a highly subjective and private work.

Don't Look Now

Let me say it right away. I hated Nicolas Roeg's slick, supernatural horror movie, *Don't Look Now*. There are extraordinary details in the film, perhaps enough for ten films (flash forwards, intricate crosscutting of parallel scenes, stunning shots of decaying Venice), but they exist mainly to call attention to themselves and to the fine eye of the director, a former first-rate camera man. In

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terms of cinema language, *Don't Look Now* is irritatingly overwritten. What bothers me most about the work is not its self-referring brilliances, but its irresponsibility toward what it evokes, which seems to me more a failure of vision and seriousness than a moral deficiency. To put it another way, there's something a bit stupid about the film's self-insistent clevernesses. So much is evoked and so little of it is made to count, the work exposing its own emptiness at every turn. The surprise ending in which a hideous dwarf, costumed like the protagonist's dead daughter, kills the guilt-ridden father——he has already had a prescient vision of his own funeral——seems contemptibly cheap (like the ending of Altman's *Images*, another piece of mind-blowing elegance).

The material is highly charged. A girl child playing near a pond drowns, in the complexly orchestrated opening scene. At the very moment the child falls in the water, her father spills some liquid (wine or water) on a slide of a section of stained glass in a church he has been hired to restore——the daughter (or another hooded small figure) also in the picture. The father (Donald Sutherland——his wife is played by Julie Christie) has a premonition and rushes to the pond, pulls the daughter out but is too late to save her. His beautiful daughter is lifeless. He tries mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. It is a painful and terrible scene, almost (if you happen to be a parent) too much to bear. The camera, the beauty of the photography, distances us slightly. The charge of the rest of the film comes out of the visceral experience of being too late——preoccupied with one's own concerns yet troubled by premonition——to save one's child from drowning.

Don't Look Now, if yielded to, exploits our guilt as audience at being unable, like the father, to save the child. The rest of the movie, which offers a number of visual correlatives to the drowning, cheats shamelessly, but with so much cinematic authority—— how can a director who knows *this* much not really know what he's doing——that one trusts it more than one ought. The Sutherland character's punishment for . . . what—— negligence, guilt, not believing in the supernatural?——far exceeds whatever his crime. The tricky resolution of the film, the imbalance of the punishment, betrays our trust as an audience and is disturbing, perhaps deeply disturbing, for just that reason. That the central character

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is a restorer of churches in a decaying city is a nice metaphor for a man whose deepest unadmitted wish is to restore his drowned daughter to life. The material pretends to seriousness, is rich in possibilities, and Roeg textures the work with an overlay of evocative detail. The only way to watch *Don't Look Now* is with some detachment as if it had no relation to human experience.

What Roeg's three films as director, *Performance, Walkabout,* and *Don't Look Now*, have in common is an extreme technical ingenuity and an aesthetic pleasure in disintegrative images, his choice of subjects apparently occasions for his camera. An exceptional occasion in the present work, a kind of set piece, is the long nude love scene between Sutherland and Christie, which though unnecessary to the film, is exemplary for its elegance and tact. For all its elegances and play of possibilities, *Don't Look Now* is essentially a tour de force of morbid chic, a devious and manipulative work, careless, really contemptuous, of its audience, fancy punishment for the masochist who has had everything. Roeg's film illustrates by contrast how conscientious, how *serious* really, a director like Hitchcock is working with what seems like similar material.

Sisters

Sisters, Brian De Palma's modest horror exercise out of Hitchcock, is less impressive and original than the Roeg, but in almost every other way its superior. De Palma's movie is more obviously a genre film, relying on conventional stereotypes as a kind of shorthand. Yet for all its borrowings, technical crudeness, and kidding of itself, *Sisters* is a fairly serious work, carefully structured and rich in suggestive implication. There are genuine pleasures in its details. The movie opens with a parody of a television game show called "Peeping Toms," in which we see a young, well-dressed black man inadvertently observe a blind girl beginning to undress. The issue of the game show is what will he do next. What's the implication of violating the unseeing with our sight? Voyeurism, which is one of the attractions of moviegoing itself, is the central metaphor of the film. The heroine, Grace Collier, who is the stereotype of the snoopy reporter, is introduced sitting at her window, observed as she observes. Later she witnesses a murder from that window, a murder we observe alter-

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nately through her eyes and as if we were in the room where the murder takes place. One of a pair of separated Siamese twins, Danielle or Dominique (Margot Kidder), is the apparent murderer. Grace pursues the mystery of the sisters relentlessly, mainly to prove herself right and the police wrong, only to become one of the sisters herself in an hypnosis-induced nightmare near the end, the ultimate voyeuristic trip. It is an extraordinary scene worth, as they used to say in less inflationary times, the price of admission. *Sisters* explores the variations, metaphoric and mythic, of secret connection among us. It is an academic film made up consciously of ideas from *Psycho* and *Rear Window* and *Repulsion* and perhaps even *Les Yeux sans Visage*, though satisfying on its own terms and responsible for the associations it evokes. Like a number of other young intellectual filmmakers, following to some extent the example of the French new wave, De Palma makes movies in homage to the movies that gave him pleasure as a member of that audience in the dark. *Sisters* is also, by implication at least, a fantasy about moviegoing. Like the Siamese twin, like the reporter-heroine, the audience of *Sisters* is made aware of itself as implicated sharer in the secret life of another.

Serpico

Serpico, directed by Sidney Lumet, is an apparent good cause with a multimillion-dollar publicity budget behind it——curious how the establishment loves to invest in ostensibly antiestablishment work——and has been self-fulfillingly well received. It is a movie about a true-life honest though eccentric cop in a den of thieves known as the New York City police force. It is an episodic work as biographical films tend to be, disconnected fragments of a life. Although it has no pretensions to art, it has, I have to say on the basis of my experience with it, equally small pretensions to entertainment. Editorializing is its issue, its reason for being. The hero, Frank Serpico, moves from one unit to another, surprised and disgusted to discover that his colleagues are corrupt wherever he turns; he becomes more alienated, his style grows more flamboyantly bohemian, he breaks off with one woman and moves in with another, and so on. The scenes Lumet chooses to show us have no more apparent significance than the ones he chooses to

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leave out. *Serpico*, which is directed with skill and minimal inspiration, is in the business of telling certain kinds of audiences what they've already suspected in their bleakest paranoid fantasies—— that almost every policeman in New York City is on the take. Al Pacino plays the title character as an attractive, perhaps excessively self-righteous, enigmatic figure, though the film offers no clue to what makes the man so tenaciously scrupulous. It seems at times that a kind of neurotic adamance drives him, which may or may not be one of the film's insights. Bad news of a righteous sort, the evidence indicates, is a highly marketable commodity in our culture.

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BOOKS

CLEANING UP FREUD

THE ANATOMY OF HUMAN DESTRUCTIVENESS. By Erich Fromm. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $10.95.

Erich Fromm is such a reasonable and humane man that one almost feels guilty criticizing him. Nonetheless *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* is an irritating book, and since it has already received several friendly reviews, perhaps this is the proper time and forum for the opposition to be heard.

Fromm has a single topic: the causes of aggression. He devotes the first third of the book to a critique of two popular explanations of human destructiveness, those of the instinctualists and the behaviorists. The former, represented here by Freud and Konrad Lorenz, argue that aggression is innate. Lorenz supports his contention with analogies drawn from animal behavior, while Freud's rests on abstract metapsychological considerations. The behaviorists, most prominently B.F. Skinner, hold that aggression is a product of conditioning, and in a number of clever experiments they pretend to demonstrate that any person can be programmed to destroy.

Fromm effectively dissects the weaknesses of both positions. In fact his critique is the only fully satisfactory portion of the book. The instinctualists, he shows, mistake a good deal of purely defensive behavior for aggression, and they are unable to account for the virtual absence of destructiveness in many societies. The behaviorists, for their part, ignore the underlying continuities in character development, as well as the basic biological and psychic needs that define the limits of conditioning.

When one turns from the critical to the constructive parts of the book the waters gradually cloud. Obviously Fromm wants to occupy a middle ground between his two antagonists, preserving the sense of psychological continuity championed by the instinctualists but allowing for the influence of circumstance——understood now not in the behaviorists' narrow sense of conditioning but as the more enduring realities of family and society. Unfortunately, no clear picture emerges of what

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combination of individual, familial, and social factors can be expected to produce aggression. The exposition is further confused by Fromm's infatuation with the existentialist doctrine of radical freedom. On more than one occasion he asserts that human beings can to a considerable extent make of their lives what they will. If such is the case, then surely any effort to sort out the causes of aggression becomes meaningless.

I don't wish to dwell on the book's failure to provide a clear and ready explanation of human destructiveness. The matter is doubtless complex, the variables many, and the empirical work necessary to such an explanation far from complete. The book is annoying not primarily because of its inconclusiveness but because of its intellectual mannerisms.

For one thing it is insufferably pedantic. There are endless distinctions and definitions, many of which immediately disappear from view. It is as if one were permanently stuck in the introduction. Italics are applied with the heavy hand of an Indian chef dispensing curry. And we are forever being told what will be discussed "later on," the last such announcement coming only twenty-five pages from the end of the text. Granted these are matters of style, but they nonetheless distract from one's pleasure in reading the book.

Much more serious is Fromm's lack of intellectual rigor. He has a weakness for uplifting but unpersuasive generalizations about love, justice, creativity, and life. He also posits fine-sounding but dubious psychological propensities, such as "the need for a goal," or the need for "a frame of orientation and devotion." He is, in short, relentlessly tender minded, despite his somber and dispiriting topic.

Most objectionable of all is a habit of mind that might be called prurient sexlessness. It is not simply that Fromm dismisses sexual experience as "trivial" and "transitory"——a mere reflection, not an integral component, let alone a determinant, of character structure. If that were all, one could with conscience respect his opinion. But in fact he insists on abusing the language and categories of those intellectuals, such as Freud, who hold that sexual experience is of absolutely primary psychological importance.

For example, Fromm calls the two principal varieties of human destructiveness "sadism" and "necrophilia." Now, as we all know, sadism and necrophilia are sexual practices, recognized as such by every authority on human sexual behavior from the Marquis de Sade to William Masters and Virginia Johnson. Fromm, however, takes issue with this consensus. The sexual manifestations of sadism and necrophilia, he tells us, are but special instances of a general psychological orientation, and far from the most important. He is thus led to posit two new categories

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of behavior: nonsexual sadism, defined as "the passion to have absolute and unrestricted control over a living being," and nonsexual necrophilia, defined as "the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive." It is at this point that my anger is aroused. Even granting that these passions exist, why not simply call the first authoritarianism (or dominance, or something of the sort) and the second destructiveness? Why, in other words, impoverish the language by pinning manifestly sexual labels on forms of behavior that one insists all the while have nothing to do with sexuality? I can only conclude that one does so for prurient reasons.

It is not merely sexual categories that Fromm cannibalizes. Nearly all the bodily functions to which Freudians have attributed weighty psychological significance are treated similarly. Thus there is much talk about "anality," particularly in Fromm's discussion of Heinrich Himmler and Adolph Hitler, whom he treats as representatives of, respectively, the sadistic and necrophilic character structures. But anality turns out to have very little to do with anuses, feces, or elimination. It is simply Fromm's lurid term for the traits of orderliness and pedantry. This usage would be justified had he retained the psychoanalytic derivation of such traits from the manner in which anal functions are handled in childhood. But of course he will have none of that. Again, he is entitled to his opinion, but he ought more honestly to speak simply of orderliness and pedantry rather than seeking to cash in on the shock value of psychoanalytic terminology while ignoring its substance.

Fromm reached the height of his popularity in the 1950s, and his influence cannot be dissociated from the complacency of that decade in our intellectual and cultural history. He stood for moderation, for the retreat from dogmatism (not only Freudian dogmatism but Marxist dogmatism as well——witness his transformation of Marx into an existential humanist in *Marx's Concept of Man*), and for the conviction that personal fulfillment lay within each individual's grasp. To be sure, his politics were to the left of those of most fifties intellectuals, but the differences were of degree rather than kind. In the 1960s, quite understandably, he suffered an eclipse, as more tough-minded and radical intellectuals, such as his old adversary Herbert Marcuse, came to the fore. One wonders, now, whether he will stage a comeback in what are shaping up as the conservative seventies. Many of the prerequisites for such a renaissance are there, including a tolerance for the religious enthusiasms of the moribund counterculture. Still, I doubt that *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* will enjoy the success of *The Art of Loving* or *The Sane Society*. It is too scholarly (as well as too political) to appeal to the audience that now reads *I'm O.K.——You're O.K.* and *How To Be*

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Your Own Best Friend, yet not scholarly enough to win the respect of academics (in nearly a hundred pages devoted to psychobiographies of Himmler and Hitler there is not a single reference to the two most prominent scholarly students of these subjects, Peter Loewenberg and Robert G. L. Waite). Unless therefore I misjudge the nostalgia mania, Fromm is no more likely to regain the limelight than Rosemary Clooney. He is now a figure out of our past, to be remembered with some annoyance and embarrassment, if also with a measure of affection.

Paul A. Robinson

BECAUSE AND BECOME

THE GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF AMERICA OR THE RELATION OF HUMAN NATURE TO THE HUMAN MIND. By Gertrude Stein. Introduction by William H. Gass. Vintage. $1.95.

"For a very long time everybody refuses," Gertrude Stein wrote in 1926, "and then almost without a pause almost everybody accepts." Yet almost without a pause, for a very long time indeed, Gertrude Stein has remained among the refused in modern literature. If at all, she is known as an early and intelligent advocate of Picasso's art, as the literary midwife who scrubbed down Hemingway's just-born style, or simply as an eminence who presided over a salon through which passed one by one the great artistic figures of her period——Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Calder, Lipschitz, Thomson, Pound, Wilder, Hemingway——artists whom everybody eventually accepted. The brief flare of celebrity that surrounded Gertrude Stein when she toured the United States in 1934–35 not only distorted her literary achievement (she was celebrated as the writer of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, not of *Tender Buttons* or *Lucy Church Amiably*), it also somewhat garishly reduced her complex style to an avant-garde version of Gracie Allen's whimsical double-talk. Outside the circle of her notable friends and on her own, she seemed merely droll, someone to be drawn out and then patronized. When she was asked the meaning of "a rose is a rose is a rose" at the University of Chicago, she saw at once the questioner's ironic presumption. "But I notice that you all know it," she declared, "you make fun of it, but you know it. Now listen! I'm no fool. I know that in daily life we don't go around saying '. . . is a . . . is a . . . is

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a. . . .' Yes, I'm no fool; but I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years." If after listening to her strange way with words, Americans did not know who she was, she did. "Also there is why is it," she would muse in *The Geographical History of America,* "that in this epoch the only real literary thinking has been done by a woman." In the last decade, helped by the reissue of a number of her important works, this Gertrude Stein has slowly begun to emerge. It may well be too soon to regard her in the company of Homer and Shakespeare where she asks to be placed: "Think of the Bible and Homer think of Shakespeare and think of me," but as a theoretician of narrative and of writing itself, she deserves scrupulous attention.

It is, after all, a question of identity, the question that absorbs Gertrude Stein in the *Geographical History*: the "Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind." In the thirties the American public was interested in her visible Human Nature, that embodied part of her which she felt was "not interesting." Since her death in 1946 the Human Mind present in her writing, the essential Gertrude Stein, has seemed inscrutable largely because the proper object of interpretation for critics has been the well-wrought urn, that form of intricately contrived art she steadfastly refused to produce. Unlike *Finnegans Wake* or *Nightwood*, the verbal play in her writings does not derive from a coherent source or refer to an underlying design. There is no hidden *Ur*-text to be revealed by formal analysis. Her writing, like the famous carafe in *Tender Buttons*, is a "blind glass," a moving surface of linguistic phenomena. Richard Bridgman's *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (1970), the first comprehensive study of her oeuvre, is thus filled with muted outcries of despair as the oeuvre, text by text, incoherently slides past him. "So, in pieces," he concludes, "because no term more accurately describes Gertrude Stein's unit of literary expression. Her compositions memorialize that daily half-hour when she gathered what came to mind and randomly, incidentally, shaped it into a prose that was part free association, part mechanical variation, part revelation only partially revealed." Yet to state this conclusion from a different critical vantage point, that of Jacques Derrida, "we rediscover the mythopoetical virtue of *bricolage*. In effect, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*, to an origin, or to an absolute *arche*." It is Lévi-Strauss, not Gertrude Stein, whom Derrida discusses in this passage, but his description of decentered "freeplay" in a world "without truth, without origin" in the essay, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," generally applies to her work which, after *The Making of Americans* (1911), continually seeks to

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disrupt the presence of a referential author, an *I* who situates and defines the text. In short, she abandons the discursive quest for the "bottom nature" of persons and things, unknowable origins and identities, for the modest realm of the known: language. "What is necessary now," Gertrude Stein asserts in the *Geographical History*, arbitrarily scrambling her chapter headings, "is content without form." Or to put it differently: discourse that stands for nothing but itself. Because "there is no real reality to a really imagined life any more," the sourceless text can now amiably generate a multiplicity of relative meanings, float free as nothing more than a discernible object in a world streaming with objects, no more or less privileged. Regarded from this perspective, her formless writing thus seems no longer a scandalous affront to the reader, an impossibly surreal diary closed to observation, but instead a precocious research of the problematics of discourse, writing as self-effaced play within the finite and yet inexhaustibly rich field of signification. "The only thing different from one time to another is what is seen," she once shrewdly observed, "and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything."

Composed in 1935 shortly after the pressures and discoveries of her American tour, the *Geographical History* is a particularly useful text in coming to terms with what is now to be seen in her writing. In its recurrent questioning of the "use of the human mind and its connection with what is being written," the book at once reveals the risk and significance of its experimental discourse and reflects her understanding that the questions asked in it are essentially American questions. Throughout the *Geographical History*, as we shall see, this comic paradox repeats itself: the writer states her identity by constantly denying its ground. There is *no* relation between human nature and the human mind, she would insist, none, and yet in looking down on the widespread terrain of the United States from the air (her first flight), she had seen everywhere the locus of her sensibility, the featureless face of the American self: "only flat land a great deal of flat land is connected with the human mind and so America is connected with the human mind, I can say so but what I do is to write it so. Think not the way the land looks but the way it lies that is now connected with the human mind." The "use" of the human mind in writing, then, is the historical "use" of geographical America: both confer the absence of identity, freedom from history. "No one knowing me," she advises, "knows me." And in that instant she is curiously manifest.

> I am I because my little dog knows me, even if the little dog is a big one, and yet the little dog knowing me does not really make

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> me be I no not really because after all being I I am I has really nothing to do with the little dog knowing me, he is my audience, but an audience never does prove to you that you are you.

Simply put, what the little dog knows——the objective human nature of its mistress——is the same behavioral object his mistress knows. What he cannot know is the self-conscious thought that realizes what he knows. To decipher the intention of the historical Gertrude Stein in the text is thus to present only her human nature, to know her as a pet would know her, as an ensemble of gestures, and this knowledge, she declares, is at best "occupying," never "interesting." It belongs to the lower orders of fiction: history and biography. "What then is the reality to which *I* or *you* refers?" Emile Benveniste asks in *Problems in General Linguistics*. "It is solely a 'reality of discourse,' and this is a very strange thing. *I* cannot be defined except in terms of 'locution,' not in terms of objects as a nominal sign is." Gertrude Stein stresses this point repeatedly in the *Geographical History*: no self that can be situated underlies the declaration of "I am I." The existence of the Mind is purely verbal; it is a linguistic entity *here* in the moment of utterance and absolutely separated from the *thereness* of the body in time, the *realia* of nature. Therefore writing ought to attend to the exercises of the mind, she argues, and relinquish the futile task of describing nature, renounce "because and become," the origin and end of things. The writer's subject can only be language and the particularity of his own discourse, a subject she found rich with possibility if one were willing to improvise, to enter the domain of syntax, the parts of speech, grammar, the sign itself, as a child restlessly imposing an individuality on these inert forms. "Articles please," she tells us in *Poetry and Grammar*, "a and an and the please as the name that follows cannot please. They the names that is the nouns cannot please, because after all you know well after all that is what Shakespeare meant when he talked about a rose by any other name." In *Tender Buttons* she writes:

> Pain soup, suppose it is question, suppose it is butter, real is, real is only, only excreate, only excreate a no since.
>
> A no, a no since, a no since when, a no since when since, a no since when since a no since when since, a no since, a no since when since, a no since, a no, a no since a no since, a no since, a no since.

The originality of Gertrude Stein's "literary thinking," and the wondrous prose it released, stems from this fundamental relocation of

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the *I* who creates discourse. Her genius, as William H. Gass suggests in his introduction, was to recognize at the start of her career that the flaw in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* extended into the entire realm of fiction. As early as 1910, struggling through the naturalistic schema of *The Making of Americans*, she had seen that the subject of narrative could no longer be a world restored, that any story told in a linear and orderly manner described an attitude toward experience that had become obsolete. In the age of film, the act of writing had to be rethought. Much in the same fashion, then, that Picasso dislocated the represented object in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in order to free painting, she sought in *Tender Buttons* (1914) to decompose traditional narrative in order to liberate writing. Yet the selfless *I* that emerges in her experimental portraiture and plays, that wholly estranged and aloof mind repetitively justified in the *Geographical History*, is remarkably familiar in its assumptions. She had studied under William James while at Radcliffe, and to a large extent her criticism of the self in the *Geographical History* derives from the Jamesian analysis of consciousness in the *Principles of Psychology*. "The identity found by the *I* in its *Me* is only a loosely construed thing," he had written, "just like that which any outside observer [a little dog] might find in the same assemblage of facts." For James consciousness is always anonymous, the embodied self always in process, never intact or unitary. Yet Gertrude Stein extends and rephrases this analysis to such a passionate degree that the Jamesian influence ultimately falls away and a purely American poetic voice speaks: "What is the use of being a little boy if you are going to grow up to be a man." Or: what is the use of writing if it is only to serve the tyrannical demand of a *telos*, the purpose of some predicated truth? So it is that Gertrude Stein enters the problematics of modern discourse——at once the artistic contemporary of Picasso and the cultural peer of Walt Whitman who also leaped outside space and time.

Indeed Gertrude Stein's argument in the *Geographical History* that the self can never be determined by its appearances, its human nature, is an argument continually expressed in American literature. "When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell," Madame Merle declares in *The Portrait of a Lady*, "and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances." To which Isabel Archer responds: "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary

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one." The Gertrude Stein who speaks in the *Geographical History* not only resumes the longing implicit in Isabel's assertion, she resumes as well Isabel's ambivalence. Neither woman lights out for the territories to give that desire its proper geographical setting. Both become instead expatriates who settle their radiant and unknowable American *I* in the most closely defined and historical of European quarters. When Gertrude Stein declares "I am I" in the *Geographical History*, then, she professes the freedom of her mind from the exigencies of time and person, but the terror of this discourse (the emptiness of that flat American space) is not mentioned. In fact few modern writers are so blithely at home in their writing, so playfully at ease. How does it happen that in her sixties Gertrude Stein writes the *Geographical History* rather than a new version of *The Confidence Man*?

The answer is expressed everywhere in her text. "In china china is not china," she writes, "it is an earthen ware." In America, however, "all who like china . . . do not like to have china in china be an earthen ware. Therefore it is not." She took an abiding delight in the arbitrary nature of the sign. "Words are what money is," she would argue, a convention, man-made. She had in effect reconstituted the New World in her Parisian apartment, not the green geographical concept of America, but an endlessly creative linguistic world in which all the words contained in language existed solely *for* her to choose and write them. Grammar and syntax were similarly *for* her. She would, Adam-like, consider the parts of speech, prefer pronouns to nouns, call the comma "servile," and cherish the preposition. "It is wonderful," she observes in *Poetry and Grammar*, "the number of mistakes a verb can make and that is equally true of its adverb." As Gass ingeniously shows in his introduction, she regarded the sentence as a veritable fountain of possibilities and would tirelessly generate them in her writing, playing with their grammatical and phonetic qualities as a jazz musician turns the notes of a hackneyed tune. The stream of her consciousness is thus always witnessed: it is the object of her meditation, a content without form, without beginning, middle, or ending. "I do not know where I am going but I am on my way," Gertrude Stein writes in the middle of the *Geographical History*, "and then suddenly well not perhaps suddenly but perhaps yes I do know where I am going and I do not like it like that." If conflict exists in this world, it occurs when the writer feels the pull toward designation, toward rule and system.

In her approach to language Gertrude Stein did find, after all, an identity that preserved her from the disenchantment and isolation of her American compatriots in Europe. She had transferred the place of American myth from landscape to language, and there, not unlike

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Whitman, she began again in the lyrical present a celebration of that unknown discursive *I*. Nor did she ever lose the exuberance of this vision. In 1945, after the liberation of France, she greeted the American Army with what became her last narrative, *Brewsie and Willie*. It was a careful and loving study of the colloquial speech of two GIs that simply went on and on before breaking off. The *Geographical History* ends: "I am not sure that is not the end."

Neil Schmitz

THE UNFINALITY OF TRANSLATION

NEW POEMS (1968–1970). By Pablo Neruda. Bilingual Edition. Translated, edited, and with an Introduction by Ben Belitt. Grove Press. $5.95.

NERUDA AND VALLEJO: SELECTED POEMS. Edited by Robert Bly. Translations by Robert Bly, John Knoepfle, and James Wright. Beacon Press. $9.95.

EMERGENCY POEMS. By Nicanor Parra. Edited and Translated by Miller Williams. New Directions. $2.75 paper.

STOLEN APPLES. By Yevgeny Yevtushenko. English adaptations by James Dickey, Geoffrey Dutton, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Anthony Kahn, Stanley Kunitz, George Reavey, John Updike, Richard Wilbur. Doubleday. $8.95.

BEOWULF. Translated by Michael Alexander. Penguin Classics. 35p.

THE AENEID OF VIRGIL: A Verse Translation. By Allen Mandelbaum. University of California Press. $10.00.

It may seem odd to include in a batch of six volumes of verse translation a version of an ancient and anonymous epic, written in a language which is the ancestor of modern English, but which nobody can read without learning it as a foreign language. (I have been told that the Frisian language of Holland, which is quite different from ordinary Dutch or Flemish, is what modern English would be like, if there had been no Norman Conquest and if England had remained a basically agricultural country.)

There is, of course, a purely personal reason: I learned Spanish at school and still read it easily and can speak it haltingly; I learned *some* Anglo-Saxon at university and can still pick my way through an Anglo-Saxon text with a crib. But there are more valid reasons. *Beowulf* marks the transition between a basically oral tradition of poetry and art poetry. It feels naive and yet it is full of the kind of tricky verbal devices,

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which are one of the things we associate with modernism (Ezra Pound's beautiful, though strikingly inaccurate, version of *The Seafarer* is at the roots of much modern metrics and diction, including his own *Cathay* and the first of the *Cantos*, the one about Elpenor and the raising of the ghosts of the dead). And the mood of *Beowulf*, the sense of *wyrd* or fate or doom, the sense of the hero's isolation, of the constant threat from monsters, seems to me much nearer the mood of much modern poetry than, say, the poetry of the eighteenth century or even of the romantics. Our human tribe seems threatened and not only the Beowulfs but the Grendels ("I have felt the death-wish too") are within ourselves.

Spanish seems to me the easiest of the Romance languages to learn and the most difficult to translate from. It is very difficult to do a wholly satisfactory version of Neruda but very difficult to do a wholly unsatisfactory one either. In these late poems translated by Ben Belitt a lot of the early violence, rage, and obscurity seems to have gone, though the essential two qualities that have fused his genius remain, pride and melancholy, very Spanish qualities, and with them a sort of sad humor. I quote Belitt's version of the second half of a fine short poem, "Diaclitos," a short poem of self-justification; Neruda's Spanish; and a possible other way of doing the same passage.

I'm a journeyman fisherman
of living wet verses
that break through the veins:
it's all I was good for.
I never contrived opportunities
out of mere vainglory
or a schemer's perversity:
whatever I say in my songs
is more than benign propaganda.
True, I did it all clumsily
and for that I beg pardon:
now leave me alone with my ocean:
I was born for a handful of fishes.

Yo soy obrero pescador
de versos vivos y mojados
que siguen saltando en mis venas.
Nunca supe hacer otra cosa
ni supe urdir los menesteres
del intrínseco jactancioso
o del perverso intrigador,
y no es propaganda del bien
lo que estoy diciendo en mi canto:
sino que no lo supe hacer,

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y le pido excusas a todas:
dêjenme solo con el mar:
yo naci para pocos peces.

I'm a workaday fisher
for living, splashed verses
that go leaping up my veins.
I could never do anything else
nor manage the chances
for sheer showing off
or for the twisty careerist,
and it's not propaganda for goodness
that I'm putting across in my song:
since I never knew how to do that,
and I ask everyone's pardon:
let them leave me alone by the sea:
I was born for a few fishes.

Neither of these versions is absolutely literal, but one regrets that Mr. Belitt left out "saltando" and failed to see that Neruda is not deprecating "propaganda del bien" or apologizing that his verse in general is clumsy but apologizing, clearly by the syntax, not for a general clumsiness in his versification but for not being able to speak out directly, as a poet, on behalf of the good as such. He doesn't say "*my* ocean" but "the sea," and he does not say "leave me alone" but "let them leave me alone" (it is not a boastful poem, nor one that addresses the reader directly). In the last line a perfectly literal version, "I was born for a few fishes," happens, by sheer luck, to have more euphony than Mr. Belitt's "I was born for a handful of fishes." But Neruda's Spanish is *en face*, and Mr. Belitt's versions do convey the sad, rather heavy dignity of this poet's old age.

Robert Bly's versions, which have three translators, offer an excellent selection of Neruda's poems from his extreme youth onward, and it must be admitted that, like many poets, he was more exciting when he was looking forward than when he is looking back, and that one misses in the later poems an unappeasable fierceness of melancholy. Here is a moving passage from Bly's own version of one of the most despairing earlier poems, "No Hay Olvida":

If you ask me where I have come from I have to start
talking with broken objects,
with kitchenware that has too much bitterness,
with animals quite often rotten
and with my heavy soul.

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That gets the feeling, but it is not quite perfect. Bly's "my heavy soul" is literally, for instance, "mi acongojado corazón," literally my oppressed or afflicted heart, and Neruda is a very *physical* poet so one would have preferred "heart" and some adjective with the weight and length of "acongojado," say "my overweighted heart." "Broken *objects*" for "*cosas* rotas" in the first line too much suggests the word "objects" in books of philosophy (and Neruda is a very *unabstract* poet) so one would have preferred the straightforward "broken things." "Animal" is rather abstract for "grandes bestias" which has a special suggestion of load-carrying animals, mules, donkeys, horses. And "that has too much bitterness" is perfectly correct, by the dictionary, for "*demasiado amargos*" except that one thinks of unwashed pots, pans, plates, and so on, as *sour* rather than bitter. But, again, one has the Spanish on the other side——and one of the special pleasures of reading translations is trying to improve them.

The Peruvian poet César Vallejo, less well known than Neruda, and in a short note, John Knoepfle gives an appealing account of him:

> The man is a mystic who is skeptical, a fugitive deeply in love with his home, an isolated man who cannot put aside his painful communion with others. He expresses in masculine tones, the massed, present anger of the poor man. And moreover there is something very ancient in this Vallejo. . . . It is the authority of the oral poets of the Andes.

(A point, the last one, which bears on the relevance in this group of *Beowulf*.) To give his flavor to readers new to him, as I am, I shall quote one very short poem translated by Knoepfle (and I here I pick no holes, for even with the help of my *Diccionario Manual Illustrado de la Lengua Española*, I can find none to pick):

BABBLE

Meek house with no style, framed
with a single knock and a single piece
of rainbow wax. And in the house
she destroys and she cleans: says at times:
"The asylum is nice. Where? Here!"
Other times she breaks down and cries.

A perfect short poem, and in its concise reticence almost unbearably moving, in English as in Spanish. Perfect translation is, very occasionally, possible.

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The Spaniards and the Spanish-Americans have a splendid grave humor and irony, and a fine sense, rather like the English sense, of nonsense but not (in the French, the American, or the Anglo-Irish sense) very much wit. Nicanor Parra is an exception and I think that being a professor of mathematics may have given him the logical quickness which lies at the essence of wit. I prefer his "poems," slow, grave, nostalgic evocations of a lost rural Chile of his childhood, to his "antipoems," but the antipoems are very witty (and funny) indeed. And there seem to me no translation problems in this volume, since wit-logic depends on ideas, which are international, not on the rooted local feelings of words. Here is the first section of a very bang-on one:

There was once a monk
who had a lot of sacred
and non-sacred books.

One day unto him there appeared
a naked girl
who looked like the Virgin.
She danced naked
on the top of his desk
the crafty scoundrel
helped himself under the desk.

There was once a monk
who had a lot of sacred
and non-sacred books.
He read none of them.

Yevtushenko, as he shows in his poems and in his preface, is a man of extraordinarily adroit charm and gaiety: the right sort of liberal in *both* Russia and Western Europe/North America, and charming enough to persuade about eight of the best living American poets to make adaptations (rather than translations) of his poems, but also to provide them with assistants who know some Russian. The authors of the adaptations range from what one might call the Parnassian at one end, like Richard Wilbur, to various kinds of anti-Parnassian at the other, like Updike, Ferlinghetti, and Dickey. I think this volume conveys the liveliness and variety which Yevtushenko's poetry must have, but it is just as well worth buying as an anthology of contemporary American skills: from, for instance, Wilbur,

Light died in the hall . . . Yet, while upon the boards
Darkness arose and played the only role,

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There poured through all my veins, in icy chords,
The chill of an inaudible chorale,

all conscious dignity and skill; to Dickey, all cunning blunt informality,

Poetry gives off smoke
but it doesn't die out.
It acts kind of crazy, flutteringly,
when it chooses us.

A very good buy even for a reader who believed that Yevtushenko was not a real person at all but a kind of "blue guitar" on which very different, but very skilled, American poets were strumming their variations on a basic theme.

And *Beowulf*? Michael Alexander learned from Pound what Anglo–Saxon should sound like in modern English but, unlike Pound, went on to learn Anglo-Saxon in a scholarly way. For generations, in English universities at least, *Beowulf* has been a kind of *pons asinorum* which young students had to cross before they could get on to literature that interested them. The translations, in prose or verse (though I would make an honorable half-exception for Charles Scott-Moncrieff, the translator also, of course, of Proust and Stendhal) have been more depressing than the original. Michael Alexander has made it come alive and contemporary. I quote one very short passage of a moralizing, not dramatic or narrative, kind:

But to elude death
is not easy: attempt it who will,
he shall go to the place prepared for each
of the sons of men, the soul-bearers
dwelling on earth, ordained them by fate:
laid fast in that bed, the body shall sleep
when the feast is done.

It is a reflection, is it not, that our aging leaders, at great international conferences, at the banquet table and the council table, might bear profitably in mind? But the language is alive all through and even more alive than this when it embraces desperate action.

The Aeneid is a universal classic in a way that *Beowulf* is not: any modern translator has, looking over his shoulder, Gawain Douglas, the Earl of Surrey, Marlowe's play, Purcell's opera, Dryden's version, and, capturing Virgil's syntax in prose, Jackson Knight's piously laborious prose version and, imitating the syntax, Hermann Broch's very great novel, *The Death of Virgil*. Allen Mandelbaum took six years over this

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translation and his rich and packed introduction shows how much thought and care he gave to his task. Saintsbury, one of the few great critics to feel a positive dislike for Virgil, felt that the *Aeneid* is too "finished" in every sense. It has been so worked upon that Virgil has left the imagination no scope to explore margins of suggestiveness and mystery. And yet, if Saintsbury is quite right, why did Dante adore Virgil and the Middle Ages think of him as a magician? Mandelbaum's version, which I read with enormous pleasure all through, is "finished" in a good sense. I give the Latin of a famous passage of ornate pathos, the death of Euryalus from Book Nine, and Mandelbaum's equivalent. Virgil:

volvitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
it cruor. inque umeros cervix conlapsa recumbit:
purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro
languescit moriens lassove papavero collo
demisere caput, pluvia cum forte gravantur.

And Mandelbaum:

He tumbles into death, the blood flows down
his handsome limbs; his neck, collapsing, leans
against his shoulder: even as a purple
flower, severed by the plow, falls slack in death;
or poppies as, with weary necks, they bow
their heads when weighted down by sudden rain.

This strikes me as magnificent. It is here and there one might say more "idiomatic," or more vivid, than Virgil. "Sudden" is Mandelbaum's addition and perhaps improvement; "falls slack" strikes me as much more vivid and concrete than "languescit." But there is a wonderful loyalty to tone, as well as text, all through. Virgil, as Mandelbaum says in his introduction, presented us with *a* world, not *the* world: and he is the kind of poet whose diction selects from, rather than welcomes, the total human vocabulary. But he is a very great poet all the same, and Mandelbaum has carried wonderully over into English that fastidious, selective greatness.

G.S. Fraser

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WHAT'S NEW?

THE NEW JOURNALISM. By Tom Wolfe, with an anthology edited by Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson. Harper and Row. $10.95.

The New Journalism heralds an epos. Fiction is dead. The novel is out as "literature's main event." Long live New Journalism. Twenty-three "examples of the genre" make up Part Two; two of them are by Tom Wolfe, who also takes up all the space in Part One. It is really Wolfe's book throughout: his blurbs present each selection, calling roll like an announcer at the fights. "Hunter Thompson's career as a 'Gonzo Journalist' began after he wrote his first book, *The Hell's Angels, a Strange and Terrible Saga*. Infuriated because *Playboy* wouldn't run a story they had commissioned . . ." The blurbs tell the story of the story. And they point out the thing to notice. "The up-shot was a manic, high adrenal first-personal style in which Thompson's own emotions continually dominate the story." Or they thrust bits of know-how at the reader, making sure he doesn't miss such fine points of the new genre as "any time a nonfiction writer uses an autobiographical approach, he is turning himself into a character in the story." This shrewd observation gets us into Mailer's contribution, *Armies of the Night*——"quite a charming book," considering that the author is normally a "very shy reporter, reluctant to abandon the safety of the Literary Gentlemen of the Grandstand."

Your true New Journalist has long since abandoned the safe grandstand. Only a decade or so back you joined a newspaper to see the world, thinking all the while that the job was "a motel you checked into overnight on the road to the final triumph. The idea was to get a job on a newspaper, keep body and soul together, pay the rent, get to know 'the world,' accumulate 'experience,' perhaps work some of the fat off your style——then at some point, quit cold, say goodbye to journalism, move into a shack somewhere, work night and day for six months, and light up the sky with the final triumph. The final triumph was known as The Novel." Then sometime in the sixties the tables turned. Mysteriously the novel drifted from its path, turned its back on "experience," on how people really live, and became "Neo-Fabulism"——"a puzzling sort of fiction . . . in which characters have no background, no personal history." Meanwhile, feature writers for mass-circulation newspapers and their Sunday supplements were making an extraordinary discovery: "It just might be possible to write journalism that would . . . read like a novel." For Wolfe himself the moment came in 1963, unexpectedly, serendipitously. "A great many pieces of punctuation and typography [were]

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lying around dormant when I came along. . . . [my ellipses] I found that things like exclamation points, italics, abrupt shifts (dashes) and syncopations (dots) helped give the illusion not only of a person talking but of a person thinking." But the main discovery came when he "started playing around with the device of point-of-view." This led him on, and soon he realized that all "this extraordinary power" of social realism comes from "just four devices." No. 1 is "scene-by-scene construction"; No. 2 is dialogue——the best thing going for involving the reader; No. 3 is "third-person point of view," getting inside your character, showing each scene through someone's eyes. The whole game could come a cropper on this device, for how can a journalist claim to be inside characters he didn't invent but only just met? "The answer proved to be marvelously simple: interview about his thoughts and emotions, along with everything else." And No. 4, the device gleaned from Balzac of recording minute details of gesture, habit, furniture, clothing, food, decor, all the symbols of "status life": "the entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think it is or what they hope it to be."

As for the rest, "from character to moral consciousness (whatever that may be)," that depends on what you have in the way of "genius." The argument is only that "the genius of any writer——again, in fiction or nonfiction——will be severely handicapped if he cannot master, or if he abandons the techniques of realism." All the power of "Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Mann, Faulkner, is made possible by the fact that they first wired their work into the main circuit, which is realism."

So much for technical explanations. There is a social explanation as well, an explanation from history. Wolfe is describing a revolution in aesthetics, in culture: a take-over by the sansculottes of the world of letters. New Journalists are the *lumpenproles*, the Low Rent crowd, "ignoring class lines," and they have had "the whole crazed obscene uproarious Mammon-faced drug-soaked mau-mau lust-oozing Sixties in America all to themselves." *The New York Times Book Review* and the *New York Review of Books* disapprove. They are trying to protect the old class structure which has the novelist at the top and the Grub Streeters below.

Waxing prophetic Wolfe foresees "a tremendous future for a sort of novel that will be called the journalistic novel or perhaps documentary novel." And it will not be an isolated event. In Wolfe's world revolution from below has been the main event in American society since World War II, and New Journalism is part of the uproarious scene. Wolfe wants to align the new kind of writing with all the mad energies bursting the old social styles at the seams.

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Behind all this is a coherent vision. It came to Wolfe while he was trying to write up a California "Teen Fair." He found in California an "incredible combination of form plus money" taking place among teen-agers and altering history. "Practically every style recorded in art history is the result of the same thing—a lot of attention to form, plus the money to make monuments to it." But always "it has been something the aristocracy has been responsible for." Think of Inigo Jones's designs, Versailles, Palladian classicism: "These were the kinds of forms, styles, symbols . . . that influence a whole society." Now, it comes from below, where least expected. "Suddenly classes of people whose styles of life had been practically invisible (even to themselves?) had the money to build monuments to their own styles. Among teen-agers, this took the form of custom cars, the twist, the jerk, the monkey, the shake, rock music generally, stretch pants, decal eyes—and all these things, these teen-age styles of life, like Inigo Jones' classicism, have started having an influence on the life of the whole country." Not only teen-agers; it is happening all over. For example, racing has replaced baseball, and "this shift from a fixed land sport, modeled on cricket, to this wild car sport (a water, air, or fire sport?) . . . [my ellipses] this symbolizes a radical change in the people as a whole."

Radical changes in "the people as a whole" is what Wolfe is after, where his subject lies. Because nobody else seems to notice. A "built-in class bias" gets in the way. "Nobody will even take a look at our incredible new pastimes, things like stock car racing, drag racing, demolition derbies, sports that attract five to ten million more spectators than football, baseball and basketball each year." Presumably all those people themselves noticed, but "nobody" means "the educated classes in this country," those who "control the visual and printed communications media," and who are still "plugged into what is, when one gets down to it, an ancient, aristocratic aesthetic." But the truth is that Las Vegas is our Versailles, the neon skyline "the new landmarks of America, the new guideposts, the new way Americans get their bearings." The sixties were a time, Wolfe teaches us in another book fleshing out his sociohistorical vision, of "a . . . Happiness Explosion." Our "serious thinkers," our "intellectuals and politicians" resist this "scary" notion, that the proles are swimming in affluence, are learning "sheer ego extension," against all the ancient rules—the workers are learning to be happy.

Without New Journalism we might not know all this. Without New Journalism we might go on thinking that the sixties were another decade of war and political assassination, of activism and reaction, instead of "the decade when manners and morals, styles of living, attitudes toward the world changed the country more crucially than political events." The

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recent "revivals" of the thirties and forties should set us straight: movies, pop songs, makeup, hair styles——these were the true changes, not unions, fascism, world war. It is style that matters, not politics; pleasure, not power; status, not class; the illusion of thinking, not thought. New Journalism is the noticing of the new way.

What about the twenty-three examples of "the first new direction in American literature in the last fifty years?" Let it be said on behalf of most of the contributors, the claim is Wolfe's, not theirs. It is a mixed group, some of it journalism only in the loosest construction. Capote's *In Cold Blood* appeared several years after the events, had no relation to what we normally call news, and belongs to an older practice of picking up stories in the press and *imagining* them into novel form. It is the kind of novel of which *An American Tragedy* is the most distinguished example; Henry James's notebooks show him fascinated with similar sources. Capote and Mailer are smuggled into the book. *Armies of the Night* is a sustained reflection on events and their meanings, and reflection is one kind of thinking, or the illusion of such, notably scarce elsewhere in the book. Some of the pieces grow out of news-making events, such as Vietnam; others are examples of what we can still call political reporting, interviews with celebrities, "in-depth" stories of specific social types (the detective, the Hollywood producer), "human interest" accounts of murderers and their backgrounds. Some are fine jobs of reporting, written with insight, sympathy, conviction, and a desire to communicate a point of view. The Vietnam stories (especially Michael Herr's), Gary Wills's "Martin Luther King is Still on the Case," James Mills's "The Detective," and Joan Didion's "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" are the best. Judged as writing, journalism new or old, fiction or nonfiction, these are good, worthwhile pieces of work.

In fact there is nothing new in writing narratives of firsthand experiences in contemporary society with dialogue, scene, dramatization. Edmund Wilson did it better than anyone in the book in his trial coverages in the twenties and in "American Jitters." Wolfe has a section in his pseudoscholarly appendix called "Is the New Journalism Really New," and lists earlier "Not Half-Bad Candidates." He mentions some obvious names: Mark Twain in *Innocents Abroad*, Stephen Crane, John Reed, Orwell. (Agee is dismissed earlier as "a great disappointment." True, "he showed enterprise enough, going to the mountain and moving in briefly with a mountain family." But "reading between the lines I would say that his problem was extreme personal diffidence. His account abounds in 'poetic' descriptions and is very short on dialogue.") But Wolfe misses the point of the examples. They exist because the phenomenon is as old as the newspaper. Moreover, since the late nineteenth century it has been

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associated with a zest for enlarging the social experience of readers, often with reform as a plain motive. See Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*. Or Jack London, *People of the Abyss*. Or the muckrakers. Or the reportage of the 1930s (Wolfe might start with William Stott's recent book, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, where he will learn just where Agee went and lived). Many of the selections in *The New Journalism* fit a familiar, well-tried mold.

If not a "new thing," there is still something special, something that needs pointing out, in the composition of the collection. It lies in the relation of the ensemble to its presumptive subject, America in the 1960s. Although there are exceptions, the dominant social voice in *The New Journalism* is degrees cooler than was true in past reportage, less outrage, more understatement, juxtaposition, irony. There is less undisguised social purpose, less passion for exposure, for change. And less concern simply for "the facts." Wolfe writes: "When one moves from newspaper reporting to this new form of journalism, as I and many others did, one discovers that the basic reporting unit is no longer the datum, the piece of information, but the scene, *since most of the sophisticated strategies of prose depends upon scenes*" [my italics]. The motive revealed here might clear up a puzzling point that appeared earlier. Why should Wolfe worry about whether literary intellectuals and other class-biased souls take notice of the wave of new styles that occupy so many millions of people? Because the cutting edge of his kind of writing is the claim that he is seeing what others, the rulers of taste, the intellectual elite, refuse to see. The assumption behind this kind of writing is that until somebody notices an event, it is not real. But the somebody has to be somebody other than the people in the event, somebody who by noticing thereby gives the event what it needs to become real: status, prestige. The same thing is true about the writing itself; it asks to be noticed, to have conferred upon it the status of "style," and now of "art."

In Wolfe's works, including his present claims to a new kind of writing, the mechanisms of a middlebrow mass culture are transparent. In *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, his book about Ken Kesey, the Merry Pranksters, and the California LSD scene, Wolfe writes: "I have tried not only to tell what the Pranksters did but to recreate the mental atmosphere or subjective reality of it. I don't think their adventure can be understood without that." Unquestionably a clever mimic, a shrewd observer, and sometimes pretty funny, Wolfe performs neat jobs of ventriloquism with his "downstage" voices. The gimmick is that all the words are authentic, taken from observation, correspondence, interviews, publications. They are ingeniously reassembled and appear as if they are the

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spontaneous generation of the narrated action itself. This way Wolfe seems to merge with his subjects, to be speaking their thoughts, feelings, words. Wolfe is at pains to authenticate his sources, but the claim matters little except as a device to keep the reader from noticing that the true facts of the genesis of the work—the interviews, research, listening to tapes, even being on the scene—are kept hidden. Unlike Terry Southern and Hunter Thompson, Wolfe does not dramatize his own participation. He is almost not there. This means that along with the actual apparatus of journalism, anything like a substantive perspective is impossible to locate. The corrugated verbal surface, the hyped-up prose, its tachycardiac speed, its fevered illusion of thinking and feeling, all disguise the *reporter*. That is why the direct quotations from a letter by a woman recounting her first experience with LSD comes with such relief: at last, a real voice. The rest is illusion of a group subjectivity, only and sheerly verbal, never complete, never completing itself in the reader's imagination, except as display, as spectacle.

What Wolfe gains by his pyrotechnics is an easy experience for the reader: just lean back and let it happen to you. But it is a deceit: by disguising itself and its procedures, by mystifying the presence of the author as a merely neutral recorder when he is in fact the only active producer of the product, Wolfe's work is a revealing instance of mass culture. The appearance of spontaneity is the product of the most arch manipulation and manufacture. By pretending to render the world always as someone's experience, from the inside, Wolfe may seem to be revitalizing the craft of journalism and preventing the loss of experience that comes with hardened journalistic formulae. But just the opposite results. He converts experience into spectacle, fixes it, reifies it as a reader's vicarious experience. He cheats us with illusions of deeper penetrations into segregated realities but the illusion is a calculated product that disguises what it is we are actually reading.

Wolfe's genre is a cool flaneur's version of the comic journalism practiced by Mark Twain and his brethren. He dons the guise of the Low Rent rebel, speaking on behalf of those who have been deprived of their status by the literary, intellectual, and political elite. His devices include a bogus erudition and intellectuality, an OED vocabulary of technical terms, outrageous but "learned" neologisms, and catalogue after catalogue of the names and things that fill the days and hours of American popular life, all presented without punctuation, as a kind of synchronistic pop mandala. He panders to both a hatred and an envy of intellectuals. His *lumpenprole* revolution is no more than a botched theft of what he thinks is the prize jewel of the intellectuals, the label of "art." Far from revolutionary it is a conformist writing, whose message at a low

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frequency is that you have never had it so good. Wolfe cannot see beyond the "chic" in middle-class radicalism, nor beyond the gamesmanship in confrontation (made into slick theater in "Mau-Mauing the Flak-Catchers"). Hardly a vision to disturb the sleep of the proprietors and managers. In many ways it is also their vision. Wolfe's revolution changes nothing, inverts nothing, in fact is *after* nothing but status. It is full of half-baked versions of ideas in currency. The best that might be said for it is that it is a put-on. But I doubt it. I think he is dead serious.

Alan Trachtenberg

VOICE AND VISION

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS. By Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence. $7.95.

THE DEVIL TREE. By Jerzy Kosinski. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95.

EXTERMINATOR! By William S. Burroughs. The Viking Press. $6.95.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* is more provocative as a straw in the wind than a work of literature. It has almost no narrative interest, almost no "solidity of specification," almost no moral complication, and almost none of the inside-dopesterism characteristic of books that sell very well; yet it has sold not merely well but best. What it does have is play, wit, structural unpredictability, some ingenious mimicry of American speech, and an absurdist vision continuous with Vonnegut's previous work, though here with a different tonal range. It seems to me possible that our literary sociology is changing in some ways that are not yet clear and that Vonnegut's rather unpretentious book, so astonishingly different from any previous bestseller, may mark the beginning of a different and wider public for new, unconventional fiction.

Vonnegut's principal strategy is to contrive the voice of a naïf, which in his case is the voice of a fifty-year-old naïf. "Everybody in America," the narrator tells us, "was supposed to grab whatever he could and hold onto it. Some Americans were very good at grabbing and holding, were fabulously well-to-do. Others couldn't get their hands on doodley-squat." Elsewhere the mention of a Colonel Sanders franchise evokes the following explanation. "A chicken was a flightless bird which looked like this: [Vonnegut here inserts his own drawing of a chicken, apparently done with a felt-tip pen, in the style of a child's coloring

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book]. The idea was to kill it and pull out its feathers, and cut off its head and feet and scoop out its internal organs—and then chop it into pieces and fry the pieces, and put the pieces in a waxed paper bucket with a lid on it, so it looked like this: [here a drawing of a bucket of fried chicken]." The two obvious risks of such a voice are that it will pall and weary the reader with its limitations of tone and, secondly, that the naive observations will finally seem to represent the mind of the author, which is to say that the book is apt to make Vonnegut himself appear simple-minded. On the other hand, the possibilities of the naive voice are considerable, and Vonnegut exploits them all: being naive, the narrator has no sense of structure or priority and thus can include anything, as indeed he does, moving in a few pages through matters of eschatology and teleology, cornball manners of the Midwest, irrelevant statistics, perverse sexuality, washroom graffiti, and automobile sales techniques. The satiric possibilities of the naive voice, moreover, are classic, and Vonnegut directs his innocent voice at American guile and idiocy with considerable effect. He explains, for example, with the same dull ingenuousness that he uses to explain the bucket of fried chicken, the function of the body bag in gathering together the fragments of a soldier killed in action. Ordinarily, however, the audience for naive narration is explicit and contained: Candide explains naively to Pangloss who explains naively to Cunegonde who explains naively to Candide while we readers overhear; Gulliver explains naively to the King of Brobdignag while we, knowing more than either of them, listen, with some humiliation and much ironic amusement. Vonnegut's narrator, on the other hand, is explaining to nobody in particular, to the generalized reader, or perhaps to himself. And thus the naïveté seems especially bald and uncontrolled, without a plausible setting.

Vonnegut's book is structured around the life and times of a Midland City Pontiac dealer named Dwayne Hoover, whose wife has committed suicide by drinking Drano, whose son is a homosexual cocktail pianist, who is himself mad throughout the book and berserk at its end. But the life of the book does not reside in the continuity of its central figures. The life of the book resides in its "bits," its gags, its lines, its long succession of comic-apocalyptic events, even its drawings. So it is that it seems pointless to criticize the book for being self-indulgent and messy; of course it is. It does not, however, seem pointless to criticize the book for its triviality. For, touching again and again on the curious and desperate backwaters of American culture, the book nevertheless dissipates much of its force with schoolboy bathroom jokes, penis measurements, and a good portion of foolishness that seems neither buoyant enough nor clever enough to justify its existence.

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Reading *The Devil Tree* one is aware of those things that Kosinski does with consummate skill: the mode that lies somewhere between Kafka and our own sense of daily reality; the flat, underplayed, uncomprehending style; the use of a kind of narrative parataxis, all of those short, unrelated bits of narrative, much of whose force lies in the art with which they are detached from each other. "The auditorium grew silent," one such section begins, "the lights dimmed; only one bright spotlight followed the frail man who walked slowly towards the marble podium. The all-male audience sat motionless, its gaze fixed upon him. The man stumbled on one of the steep steps leading to the podium, but promptly recovered his balance. No one moved." It is a unique fictional method, so starkly inimitable that anyone who had ever read anything by Kosinski would know who had written those lines. The narrative parataxis, moreover, is a marvelously expressive device for Kosinski's purposes in *The Devil Tree:* wishing to show the rootlessness of his central character, he is able to move him from Manhattan to Nepal without transition or modulation; wishing presumably to show the particular shallowness of his quest for sensation, he is able to show unfulfilled sex, unmotivated drug use, and unresolved encounter sessions by the rhythms and omissions of his narrative segments.

Kosinski evidently intends for his novel to embody American myth and American reality, American dreams and American limitations, which means that *The Devil Tree* aims in a somewhat different direction from *Steps*, which locates all of its scarifying brutality in no particular place, and *Being There,* which projects a fatuous extension of American power without much attempt to place that movement in the solid texture of American reality. What such a purpose requires is a certain consistency of mode. Yet the book moves among a variety of modes: at one time it is neopicaresque, the central figure a bemused invisible man in the world of petty functionaries; at other times it seems a rather unfocused and old-fashioned piece of satiric realism; and at still other times it is cut loose altogether from social fact, in a country of the mind like Kafka's *Amerika.* So it is that its import is diffuse, its ability to move the reader is intermittent, its parts are better than its whole, and its voice is greater than its vision.

William Burroughs's *Exterminator!* seeks quite deliberately to exploit a mixture of modes. Its styles shift, from a dull, low colloquial, spliced together without punctuation ("You couldn't say exactly when it hit familiar and dreary as a cigarette butt ground out in cold scrambled eggs the tooth paste smears on a washstand glass why you were on the cops day like another just feeling a little worse than usual which is not unusual at all well an ugly thing broke out that day in the pre-

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cinct . . . "); to an end-of-the-world romantistic ("In the desolate markets the bright fabrics and tinware no longer flap and clatter in the winds of God. There are few purchasers and fingers that touch the merchandise are yellow and listless with fever"); to a brisk documentary ("Sunday August 25: Out to the airport for the arrival of McCarthy. An estimated fifteen thousand supporters there to welcome him mostly young people. Surprisingly few police. Whole scene touching and ineffectual particularly in retrospect of subsequent events"). These styles, and a good many others, occur in discrete and discontinuous sections, united not even by continuous "characters" but only by a common exploitation of the comic-apocalyptic motifs that one easily associates with Burroughs's work.

It is an extremely demanding way to write a book, to begin to do something different every five pages or so, and to bring it off requires not only skill but virtuosity of a very high order. The greatest likelihood is that the book will seem frightfully uneven, demonstrating that its author does some things better than others, which seems to me very much the case with *Exterminator!*. Another likelihood is that a book so discontinuous will seem, at its end, not to have been structured but only to have grown by accretion, like a scrapbook, and this too seems to me the case with *Exterminator!*. For all of its brutality, there is so much comic-strip stylization to its whores, pimps, junkies, presidential advisers, and scientologists, that the brutality never seems quite persuasive. The most chilling aspect of the book, in fact, seems to me the dust jacket photograph of Burroughs himself, gaunt, riven, Lazarus returned from the dead. Nothing in the art of *Exterminator!*, despite moments of great verve and inventiveness, seems to me commensurate with the implicit vision behind those hollow eyes.

Philip Stevick

CLOSED CIRCUIT

ON CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION. By Richard Hoggart. Oxford University Press. $5.95.

Americans in England are often surprised by the degree to which all possible circuits of communication are used to convey information. That is to say, everything —– the car you drive, what you drink, the hour you dine, the way your hair is cut, and above all, of course, the way you speak —– have dramatically intense meaning. Nothing seems to

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be done simply for its own sake or in the most immediately practical way. Instead, everything is stylized to carry a signal, to tell the world something about the sender's values, background, probable courses of action.

Richard Hoggart, the director of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University and currently Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, is professionally interested in this Jamesian intensity of communication. Alert to the full range of sign systems, he can even speak of "the code book of tooth-signals in our society," meaning that even the teeth are managed —— concealed, revealed, framed by the lips —— in such a way as to convey information about a speaker and his attitudes. For Hoggart, as for many modern theorists, a culture is essentially a vast network of communication systems. Almost every thing and every action have been preempted, stylized, and coded for the purpose of transmitting information from one point to another. The world as language-system then, making use not only of words, art, gesture, or body language, but clothing, banners, advertising images, architecture, prevalent color choices, etc., to convey meaning.

In a fairly relaxed way —— the essays printed here were originally BBC lectures —— Hoggart observes man the communicator on several

SOLZHENITSYN

"I think that few people having read this book would be the same as when they opened its first page. In this respect, it seems to me that nothing in Russian or world literature can compare with it."—*Roy Medvedev*

The GULAG Archipelago

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levels of his signal-sending and -gathering activity. A national culture is itself seen as being made up of an elaborate, highly arbitrary communications system, which is so ritualized that we become aware that it is a "language" when we move to another culture and realize that we are no longer able to read the signals of others accurately and cannot convey what we wish to say about ourselves. UNESCO has proven one of the most interesting areas of observation for Hoggart in this respect, for here in this international agency there is no common culture and therefore no central language or system of signals. Everyone is terribly worried about what everyone else is saying, but never quite entirely sure of what has been said or should be said, which seems to raise the level of anxiety considerably. Hoggart describes in a most interesting way the development of a strange language of "officialese," which is an abomination to outside ears but within the organization itself serves the primary social functions of any language system: "There is a pressure in international organizations to find a form of language which, though its users hope it says what has to be said, avoids unnecessary incidents, insoluble problems, time-wasting arguments, accusations of bias."

The longest chapter of the book deals with another area where the struggle over the "language" to be used is continuing: the public media, and most particularly television. This is an area where Hoggart has worked before with great insight, and he again reminds us of the extraordinary importance of the decision about what the media are going to say, and of the unusual lack of intelligence which is brought to bear on the question. He does not bewail the actual content of television so much as attack the failures of the communicators to consider what it is they are actually doing and, above all, what they ought to be doing.

This "ought" is the crucial term in the book as a whole. Hoggart shares, of course, his conception of the world as an elaborate set of communications systems with a great many other critics and writers of the day. A French critic, like Roland Barthes, will define the field as a set of sign systems, and then proceed as objectively as possible, to analyze the nature of communications systems in general, trying by logical means to isolate the *langue* which generates the individual *paroles*. But Hoggart, on the other hand, noting the same facts, quickly passes on to a consideration of moral questions involved such as, "What kinds of communications systems are good and right, and what kinds are wrong?" He cannot endure the logical abstraction or the possibility that any communications system might finally be judged entirely on such structural grounds as the coherency of the component parts or the economy and elegance of the basic rules. "Roots" is a key term for Hoggart. He wants rhetorics that have their roots deep in the individual self, that

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draw on the full possibilities of human life, that spread out through and take their strength from deep involvement with the culture of which they are a part.

There is a strain of pessimism in Hoggart, and he knows —— more than half believes —— that all human systems of communication may fail in their basic purpose. Man may not really want to say anything or have anything to say. The sound of man's own voice in the wind may finally be all that is desired. Or, if the communication is sought for, the signals, as in Ionesco's *The Chairs*, may never be received or interpreted correctly. But despite these doubts, Hoggart continues to make two great assumptions, "that it matters to communicate and that one can communicate. . . ." The contents, means, and ends of communication are, in Hoggart's system, the traditional optimistic values of liberal democratic society. "The individual matters . . . more than the society." But the individual needs to avoid the conventionalized, and therefore empty, languages of his culture and seek out instead a rhetoric which will truly reveal him to himself and present that authentic self to others, thus permitting true identification and sympathy. This true self is, in Hoggart's view, the only matter that is finally communicable, the only subject matter that can reach across the void and maintain its strength through the mediating terms to communicate genuinely with the "other." Such truths of self, which in all their variety and multiplicity of shapes should also be the substance of public broadcasting and the concern of cultures, tend to take quite humble forms of loss in Hoggart's system: the stunted figure of a miner disappearing into the dark alley of a northern industrial town, or, at a more intense level, Captain Snegirov, in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, revealed before his son as a helpless and failed human being.

On Culture and Communication is a modest book, modest in size and in tone. But it makes the traditional humanist claims that the value of things is only to be understood from a moral perspective and through humane values. A communications system will be meaningful, will effectively communicate, only if both its methods and its contents accord with certain fundamental values such as freedom, the recognition of diversity, honesty, tolerance of variety, and the recognition of the intense overwhelming reality of the individual self. Without these we have only "a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury Signifying nothing." This, Hoggart quietly fears, may in fact be all that we do have.

A.B. Kernan

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THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

THE PRISON-HOUSE OF LANGUAGE: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF STRUCTURALISM AND RUSSIAN FORMALISM. By Fredric Jameson. Princeton University Press. $9.00.

Fredric Jameson's recent book, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*, is an ambitious and sophisticated analysis of Structuralism and its forebears. While many critics have responded with a certain Thel-like hysteria to the now massive collection of Structuralist writings which have descended upon America from France, Jameson has calmly tried to determine the nature of the beast before launching any attack. And he thus helps us to deal with many of our nagging, primitive questions about Structuralism: does it represent a perverse delight in unnecessary complication? Is it merely the bureaucrat's dream —– a system of interpretation in which every unruly element of a literary work can be fitted to the Procrustean beds of structures like bipolarities, rectangles, and equations? Or is it a higher form of truth than most of us can attain?

Jameson himself does not answer those questions with anything like dogmatism or even finality. Indeed, the most obvious and impressive feature of his book is the care he takes to suggest his own answers only in conjunction with closely reasoned explications of some of the major Structuralist writings. And because he feels no need to pass an absolute judgment on all of Structuralism, Jameson constructs his theoretical discourse like a man at liberty, with the world all before him. For him, an analysis of Structuralism is simply part of the process of self-education —– a stage on the way to a critical theory which will reveal the presence of a reflective reader while it renews "our fascination with the seeds of time." As he very practically and winningly says in his preface,

> . . . to "refuse" Structuralism on ideological grounds amounts to declining the task of integrating present-day linguistic discoveries into our philosophical systems; my own feeling is that a general critique of Structuralism commits us to working our way through it so as to emerge, on the other side, into some wholely different and theoretically more satisfying philosophical perspective.

Jameson is thus writing in what he might call a "dialectical" mode when he takes on the burden of interpreting language-oriented methodologies through which he hopes to emerge with something "wholely different." Yet Jameson never completely provides the "wholely different and theoretically more satisfying philosophical perspective" which is his aim,

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so that the book is best read as a preface which tantalizes us with hopes for his future critical work. Ultimately he promises a theory which will give an as yet unelaborated concept of history a privileged position.

Even though Jameson's full treatment of the concept of history remains *in potentia*, however, it has certain actual effects upon *The Prison-House of Language*. First, Jameson seems most comfortable and informative when he treats the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and the Russian Formalists, largely because he is able to see their work as already historically complete. His account of the history (or prehistory) of Structuralism begins on a note of appropriate drama with the work of Saussure, a reluctant rebel who overturned the traditional philological approach to language (in which he worked for much of his life) with an insistence upon purely intrinsic analysis. Saussure's linguistic model of purely synchronic terms (rather than of diachronic philological terms) represented more than simply a new tool for linguistic analysis; it was also a symptom of a more profound shift "from a substantive way of thinking to a relational one," a shift we can see most forcefully at work in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, which renews our sense of the sheer volatility of individual words by putting them into play in seemingly endless varieties of "language-games." Saussure's basic distinctions —— between diachronic and synchronic, *langue* and *parole*, form and substance —— constituted a methodological repudiation of the empiricism through which a language and its discrete elements had been seen as preestablished, fixed objects for study. And, of course, the radically new method produced radically new insights. Most significantly, Saussure's treatment of language always involves an emphasis upon the difference —— or distinctiveness —— *between* the individual elements of language; "in language there are only differences *without positive terms*," so that context becomes the preeminent factor in assigning a value or function to a specific linguistic unit.

The Russian Formalists exploited the Saussurean insistence upon difference or discontinuity in a literary theory based on Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), in which the project of producing a renewal of perception is seen as determining the very structure of individual literary works. Within this emphasis on perception, which Jameson instructively links with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the basic concept of difference was fruitful in constructing larger patterns as well. It generated for the Formalists a delimitation of the field of literary study (the literary was to be seen as *parole* against the background of the general *langue* of the society) and a broad theory of literary history, in which the model was one of discontinuity and abrupt change rather than of direct and easy linear succession.

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Jameson's critique of both Saussurean linguistics and Russian Formalism is, basically, that their formulations are incapable of dealing with diachrony in any meaningful way. Their sense of time is, for him, too distant from the time in which people live, in which readers read. Saussure, for instance, was finally incapable of dealing with the mysterious process in which sentences are built up, because syntax inevitably eluded his rigorous methodological insistence upon a study of purely synchronic structures (as Chomsky has repeatedly argued in developing his own syntactic structures). And Jameson feels that even the perspective of the Russian Formalists was insufficiently historical: by seeing literary change as a uniform mechanism the same at all times and all places, the Formalists ended up "turning diachrony into mere appearance and undermining any genuine historical awareness of the changing of forms."

After these cogent insights, Jameson's sense of history becomes more troublesome for his treatment of the Structuralists. With Saussurean linguistics and Russian Formalism, Jameson's historical perspective enables him to work a certain irony upon their models: they could not adequately deal with history, but history enables us to deal with them. With Structuralism, the availability of that irony is in question because the limits of Structuralism remain to be determined. And Jameson's exposition is inevitably vexed by the possibility that the Structuralists' radical critique of traditional concepts of history will itself generate a theory of history which might be persuasive to him.

After nicely formulating the distinctiveness of Structuralism in terms of "its insistence on the signifier," Jameson offers intelligent though rather brief discussions of such diverse figures as Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Greimas, Barthes, and Derrida. And it is with the psychologist Lacan and the philosopher Derrida that Jameson appears most engaged and engaging. Their attention to the total sign itself, to the process of signification, strikes him as the most thorough working out of the Structuralist enterprise. Particularly appealing to Jameson is Derrida's recent questioning of the privileged position of the very structures of Structuralism —— a highly reflective elaboration of his earlier critique of the metaphysics of "presence" attached to the word, in the form of the traditional belief that words can be —— or could once, before the fall, have been —— what they mean. Derrida's critique of Structuralism is, Jameson asserts, the result of his knowledge that "to choose to speak of reality in terms of linguistic systems, to re-express the problems of philosophy in the new linguistic terminology, is of necessity an arbitrary and absolute decision, one which makes of language itself a privileged mode of explanation." Even the nearly endless regress of Structuralist thought has a suspicious fixity to it.

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By seeing Derrida's recent work as the "final moment of Structuralism," however, Jameson closes off his argument a bit hastily. And in his final pages, he presents an argument from historical design which seems to me the only cheap maneuver in the book. After suggesting that Structuralism remains a prisoner of the Kantian dilemma of the unknowability of the *Ding an sich*, Jameson hopefully conjectures that time will take care of the dilemma:

> At the conclusion of our examination, such an unconscious recapitulation of the philosophical tradition does not seem altogether without its advantages. For we know, in a sense, the sequel to the story, and are well aware how a kind of historicizing and dialectical thought was able to convert the static Kantian description of the mental categories into historical moments in an unfolding logic or process.

Such a solution to the dilemma of Structuralism appears to solve that dilemma only by hypostatizing history as a new unknowable *Ding an sich*. But even though this argument is rather lame, it interferes only briefly with my conviction that Mr. Jameson is eminently capable of producing a very subtle and thorough scheme of the relationships between literature and history. One finishes *The Prison-House of Language* with great expectations for his next book.

Frances C. Ferguson

FIRSTS

HAWK MOON. By Sam Shepard. Black Sparrow. Limited edition $15.00; paper $4.00.

THE ENTOMBED MAN OF THULE. By Gordon Weaver. Louisiana State University Press. $6.95.

Best known for his script work on Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point,* Sam Shepard has written a curious and disturbing first book in *Hawk Moon: A Book of Short Stories, Poems and Monologues* —– full of perverse, often gratuitous bloodlust, moodiness, retribution fantasies, Indians, run-on sentences, pop mysticism, and intensely imagined fragments.

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There is a sense in which, one might argue, the obsessive, extreme, arbitrary violence and necrophilia of *Hawk Moon* dramatizes life in our culture and is therefore somehow "right" for us. We have Joyce Carol Oates and Leonard Michaels and John Hawkes and John Gardner, after all, writing fiction that is often described as neo-Gothic; we have Ken Russell and Sam Peckinpah knocking them dead in the aisles; we have what used to be called teeny-boppers dancing kinky dances to Alice Cooper's "I Love the Dead." But *Hawk Moon* mostly belies these comparisons, except perhaps for the last.

In one vignette, a maniac calmly licks and pastes five thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills all over the body of a naked female corpse in his hotel room, then takes out his old Buntline Special and runs his fingers back and forth along the "smooth black barrel." After this, he plays Russian roulette with the corpse; dresses up in his favorite cowboy gear; puts on his Stones *Sticky Fingers* album at full volume; then pours gasoline over the "tits," lights the whole works, cremates the corpse in the bathtub, and tidily washes the ashes down the drain. Shepard constantly mixes sex with violence in such hideous combinations.

In another fragment, an unidentified character describes how to start a forest fire at night and then watch "the beautiful orange glow eat up the blackness and listen to the far away snapping and booms as trees explode and fall like planes shot down. . . ." In other instances: a "tourist" is reduced to a sniveling, bleeding heap in the middle of his New York apartment —— biting and tearing at his own arms —— as the result of a hexed Kachina doll he has purchased from Hopis in Arizona; the leader of a gang of twelve-year-old hoods cuts off the left ear of an innocent young nurse at a bus stop and later drives a hole through the white lobe with a nail and threads it on a leather thong to wear around his neck —— and the "Gods are well pleased" by this; an unidentified character "kick[s] the shit" out of his dog for eating a peacock in their rich neighborhood, then decides peacocks are "dumb" —— so he starts stalking and killing them with his twenty-two, returning with his dog each night "bloody and laughing with murder."

Possibly because of Shepard's screen and theatre background, where characters are full-bodied the instant they set foot on stage or soundset, he appears unable (or unwilling) to deal with full characterizations in a narrative form. One does not have a sense, at any rate, that he is expressing any special or sophisticated aesthetic theory or attitude toward character or characterization as he works, rather that he is freaked out on media tempos and disunities and/or figures he is writing for media freaks. So, he parcels out the intense close-up, the quick cut, the precise sense of rhythm and timing (which he is very good at, by the way), the

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corny mysticism, or the cheap thrill of blood on the carpet.

One may readily feel sympathy with the strong antibourgeois strain in Shepard. In "Mr. and Mrs. Sizzler," for instance, he paints a pastoral scene of a quiet family barbeque in Hollywood Hills —— then "BLAM! the house blows up." But there is a difference between antibourgeois art and the glorification of bloodlust and necrophilia. Maybe the bloodlust and necrophilia is simply a pose to shock Nixon-lovers everywhere; but in this hairy culture in the 1970s, how can we be sure Shepard is really joking?

If his intent is to take potshots at the culture, he usually fails to strike home, it seems to me, because too frequently his understanding of the culture seems simplistic, or the targets of his animosity seem so stiffly stereotyped, nothing but straw men to mow down. Who *doesn't* hate American "tourists" or "backyard barbequers" or an occasional "nurse" —— on principle. Stereotypes are easy to hate, but is this what we need? We have all become "connoisseurs of anti-Americanism"; we have such a lot of it to choose from. Why rig a fictional America that is *nothing but* a justification for violent destruction?

If the bad guys in *Hawk Moon* are straw men, the good guys are monsters. Unlike our best neo-Gothic writers such as, say, Joyce Carol Oates (who is so much more than neo-Gothic, who is unclassifiable), Shepard, gifted as he undeniably is, creates no moral or philosophical distance from his characters; and the characters are not merely sinister or amoral; they are enthusiastically evil. Frequently they gloat in their crimes; they are sexually excited by the very idea of violent death or destruction. They are fascinated by the abomination, but the abomination is no longer abominable for them. At times, the Shepard of *Hawk Moon* seems to have embraced the ghoulishness and sadism of media-distorted aspects of the culture he wishes to attack and rationalized it as Indian lore and the wisdom of savagery, a bizarre interpolation. If Charles Manson could write fiction, *Hawk Moon* is what it might look like —— there is so much hate and incredible mixed up voodoo in this book.

Gordon Weaver's strong suit is his ability to enter into his characters' bloodstreams without spilling . . . blood or what have you. In more or less conventional, sustained forms in *The Entombed Man of Thule,* his fiction is marked by sympathy, coherence, verbal magic, strong characterizations, and compelling feats of imagination.

The perhaps unconscious unifying metaphor for the collection is found in the title story. The narrator, deserted by his "pretty wife," agonizes late at night in his empty house while a spectacular ice storm encases the city; " . . . fifty thousand homes are without power." Projecting his grief, the narrator's mind fastens on the image of "the

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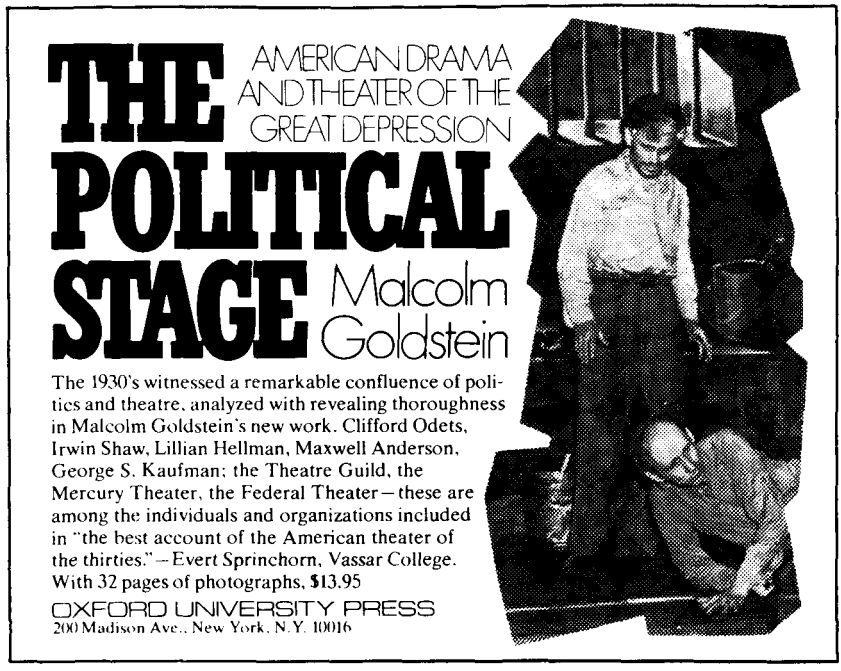
entombed man of Thule," an ancient, dead hunter perfectly preserved in the glacial ice near Thule, Greenland — now a tourist attraction. "No one knows who he was or how long he has been there. . . . He wears winter clothes, perhaps the skins of animals he trapped before he was trapped himself. His face is tan and his eyes are open . . . he looks more astonished than dead." The fantasy of the entombed man is less a focus of self-pity for the narrator than of numbness, amazement, and horror, in spite of the fact that he finds a hopeful omen in the morning: *his* electricity is still working. Determined to hold himself steady, he goes out to the barbershop. No, he is not electrocuted or run over by a snowplow. Later, his nextdoor neighbor prosaically asks permission to tap into the current in his cellar to start his oil furnace. But that night, as the wind comes up and branches begin to collapse under the weight of ice, the strained wires in the narrator's yard snap also and he awakens, frightened and depressed, in the cold house.

"The Entombed Man of Thule" is a simple, quiet story of loss, where weather and external chaos mirror the emotional condition of the character — nothing new in that — but Weaver handles it so smoothly and tactfully that one experiences a sense of relief and gratitude, and also a sense of having lived, for a short duration, another person's life. I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don't know —— maybe it seems shameful to bring up —— but isn't that what some fiction should still concern itself with? just what it feels like to be inside someone else's bones? How else lay waste the suffocating, dehumanizing influences of media stereotyping? People constantly need to find new ways of imagining their own and others' lives. Weaver is very good at eliciting vicarious participation of this sort.

In Weaver's story "Finch the Spastic Speaks," for instance, the reader is coaxed into an identification with the point-of-view character, Finch, whose entombment is more than purely physical, though it does have physical roots. Locked forever in "his prison of chaotic muscles," Finch has the additional burdens of sensibility and a high IQ, though he "must choke and strain like some strangling madman if he is to ask for so much as a drink of water." Hopeless in social situations, Finch is apt to generate an impulsive spasm and toss a cup of punch into his own face at a cocktail party; he is "in danger of drooling idiotically" —— yet he develops a crush on "the beautiful winner of the regional science fair" at the university he is attending. He is unutterably fascinated by the perfect fluidity of her movement, "artless as the flow of water." Finally, motivated by a report from his doctors that his own miserable body is atrophying faster than expected, Finch finds the courage to make a date with this woman of his dreams, which she surprisingly accepts. After a movie, Finch makes a horrible botch of the love scene, frightening and pawing the girl unwittingly. Through this episode and the exceptionally attentive and friendly treatment of strangers, which Finch understands, which he always understands, we come to see how pathetically cut off he is and knows he always will be; the barriers are insurmountable.

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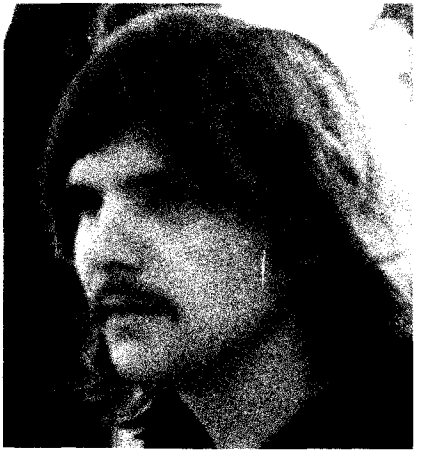

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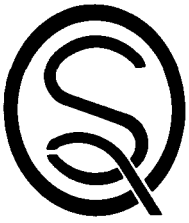

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NOTES *(Continued from p. 172)*

land, **JOHN MATTHIAS** will publish his second volume of poems, **Turns**, next year. . . . **JAMES McMICHAEL** tells us he is building a house in Idaho. . . . **JOHN ROMANO** teaches Freshman English at Yale and is working on a dissertation on Dickens and Tolstoy. . . . **ROBERT VAS DIAS** is living with his family in London and writing full-time. He will give a series of readings in the United States in the spring. . . . With a Younger Humanist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities **JOHN TYTELL** is completing a book on the Beats that McGraw-Hill will bring out in 1975. . . . **EDWARD MARCOTTE** is working on a series of essays on prose fiction. . . . **JONATHAN BAUMBACH** is associated with the Fiction Collective, a publishing cooperative bringing out its first group of novels in the fall. . . . On leave from Stanford where he teaches modern European intellectual history, **PAUL A. ROBINSON** is completing a book on Havelock Ellis, Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson. . . . This fall **NEIL SCHMITZ** will be teaching American literature at the University of Sussex. His essay on **Tender Buttons** will appear in **Journal of Modern Literature**. . . . **G. S. FRASER** is recovered from a serious illness and again teaching and writing, his latest contribution being to a festschrift for William Empson. . . . **ALAN TRACHTENBERG** teaches American studies at Yale. He is editor of the **Memoirs of Waldo Frank** and is working on a study of the literary uses of photography. . . . **PHILIP STEVICK** is in the English Department at Temple and is restoring his Bucks County stone farmhouse. . . . **A. B. KERNAN** is Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of English at Princeton. . . . **FRANCES C. FERGUSON** is a member of the English Department at Johns Hopkins. . . . Author of **The New Fiction**, **JOE DAVID BELLAMY** is at St. Lawrence University where he edits **fiction international**.

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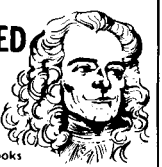

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"I appeal to you with respect and hope."

ANDREI SAKHAROV

It is a great honor for me that my voice will be listened to by Social Democrats, and representatives of U.S. trade unions. Your movements' dedication to the defense of human rights, openness of society, and principles of true detente, is very important for the people of our country.

We all welcome the negotiations that are now being held aimed at preventing a thermonuclear world war, as well as the armaments race, and to promote negotiations directed to increased trade relations—in short, all that is denoted by the word 'detente'.

But at the same time, there continue to be arrests, interrogations, and searches of dissidents, religious persecutions (for instance in the Baltic area), harassment of honest writers, obstacles placed in the way of free emigration and discrimination against national minorities. In an irrefutable way, this shows that the external detente is tragically not accompanied by an internal and human detente.

It seems to me, however, that now in the West forces are appearing with a beginning awareness of the danger of such a situation. Your response to our cause is one of the proofs of that concern. I should like to take this opportunity to appeal to you for support for a number of urgent social campaigns:

1. **A campaign for free access by the Representatives of the International Red Cross and World Health Organization to inspect the Soviet places of incarcerations and mental hospitals.**
2. **A campaign for amnesty of Soviet political prisoners. I should like to call to mind once again such glorious names as Vladimir Bukovsky, Peter Grigorenko, Semen Gluzman, Valentin Moroz, Leonid Pliushch, Vladimir Borisov, and Yuri Shikhanovitch. A great number of other names should be added to this list.**
3. **A campaign to end discrimination against such national minorities as the Crimean Tartars, Germans of the Volga area and the Turk-Meskhs.**
4. **A campaign for freedom of emigration.**
5. **A campaign to defend Solzhenitsyn, linked with free distribution of his book in the U.S.S.R. Our official propaganda insists that the crimes described in The Gulag Archipelago have already been condemned. But it is necessary to consistently emphasize that if for the typing of this manuscript persons are to be imprisoned, then a cover-up and even support of the crimes will be expressed, rather than their condemnation.**
6. **A campaign to defend all the honest writers who have been harassed, including Galich, Maksimov, Chukovskaya, Nekrasov, Marchenko, Amalrik and many others.**

I shall now give you the latest information. On January 30th the Union of Writers of the U.S.S.R. (prose section) expelled Vladimir Voinovitch, the gifted author of many books, including a brilliant and funny satire about the soldier Ivan Chonkin. He joins the list of those honest writers who have been expelled for ideological reasons—a list which already includes Solzhenitsyn, Galich, Maksimov, Chukovskaya—as happened previously to Pasternak, Akhmatova, and Zoshchenko.

Ideological freedom in our country and the survival of great literature as such is impossible if we do not struggle to defend every honest writer.

I now appeal to you with respect and hope. I take upon myself the liberty of expressing my gratitude to you on behalf of all Soviet dissidents.

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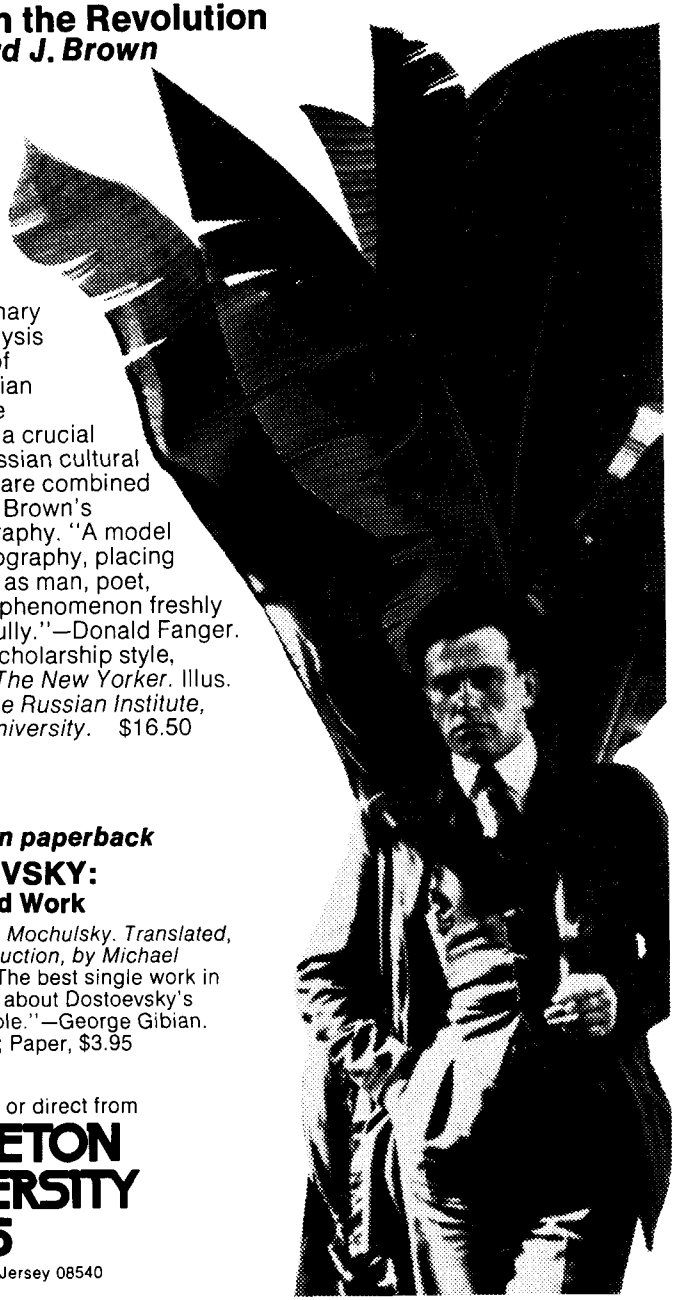

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